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Mardi 4 octobre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 October 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 octobre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 3, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters / Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui a trait à des questions concernant les élections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill this morning. I think I've got five minutes or so to discuss this legislation, and I'm happy to have that opportunity.

I think it's important that we note that throughout the process, our goal has to been to change the way politics is done in Ontario. That's why the Premier directed caucus to stop hosting large-scale fundraisers where ministers interacted solely with stakeholders in their portfolio. That's why we brought forward a bill that banned corporate and union donations entirely.

Many people will know, because there were a number of communities that hosted events, that over the summer months, after first reading—I think it's important to point that out—we heard from opposition parties and from experts in the general public on how we could improve this particular bill. I don't think we can overstate that it's very unusual—and for members of the public who are following this debate on television to understand and realize the unique step that was taken when we allowed this bill to travel after first reading. Most people probably are not aware that that rarely happens. The Premier saw such importance in this particular bill and wanted to provide as much opportunity as possible for people to provide their input and to provide for potential amendments that this bill did, in fact, travel after first reading over the course of the summer. I think that is very, very significant and I think it speaks to the seriousness with which we take this issue and our attempt to

bring forward legislation that really reflects the will of the people of the province of Ontario.

As a result of that, we brought forward comprehensive amendments that included lowering contribution limits even further, creating a clear definition of third-party advertising and strengthening limits for government advertising before an election.

To address the issue of fundraising events, we proposed working with all political parties to develop a code of conduct. In order to strengthen democracy and its institutions, we want to continue to show leadership by going another step further. That's why we will be bringing forward an amendment to ban fundraising events for all MPPs, candidates, party leaders, nomination contestants and leadership contestants. There were no amendments before the committee that went as far as we need to go on this issue, and that's why we will be bringing those forward.

Rules on fundraising should apply equally to all parties. Banning fundraising events is a significant change that will affect both parties and riding associations. That's why our amendment will also increase the per-vote allowance.

Speaker, with Bill 2 we are going to fundamentally change the way politics is done in Ontario. I want to talk a little bit about the process that we used to get here. We first introduced legislation in the spring that the Chief Electoral Officer called "the most significant redesign of Ontario election laws" in 40 years.

For changes as monumental as we are considering, we needed to take it to Ontarians, and we passed a motion that I referenced earlier, allowing the Standing Committee on General Government to sit for four weeks over the summer and hold hearings across the province. As I said, that was after first reading, which does not happen often. The committee heard from Ontarians in Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, Kitchener-Waterloo, London and Windsor. We want to thank Ontarians who came out and gave their feedback on this particular bill. Their ideas were incorporated into amendments designed to strengthen the legislation.

Now, as I said, we have a bill that will remove even the perception of undue influence on our political and electoral system. How are we doing this? Speaker, if passed, Bill 2 will lower the maximum contribution amount to \$1,200 to a nomination contestant or constituency association, \$1,200 to a candidate and \$1,200 to a leadership contestant as well. That will lower the maximum contribution amount from \$33,250 under the current system to just under \$3,600, a 90% reduction.

Speaker, the Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act, if passed, would fundamentally change the way we do politics, as I've mentioned. We're going to ban corporate and union donations, we're going to lower the limits that I have referenced already, and it would place restrictions on third-party advertising.

We allowed debate to continue when we reached 6.5 hours of debate on the bill so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views on the bill. This bill has seen nearly 10 hours of debate, and according to my count, we have heard nearly half of the members of this Legislature speak to the bill. Speaker, there's been considerable debate on this bill and we have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives. Unfortunately, much of the debate has been repeating points already made by other members.

It's time that the bill is put to a vote for second reading and hopefully be referred to committee, where important work takes place. In committee, members of all parties will hear from stakeholders that have an interest in this bill. Members of the public will be able to provide their important input on this bill. In committee, members will have an opportunity to move amendments to strengthen the bill, and this House can move on to debate other matters.

Speaker, there are other important pieces of legislation already introduced, which the government would like to debate and move through the legislative process: one, Bill 27, the Burden Reduction Act; and two, Bill 7, Promoting Affordable Housing Act. As a result of that, we would like to spend time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but we can't until Bill 2 is referred to committee for further review. Speaker, as result, I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Having listened to the minister and his motion to close debate on this thing, it is my opinion at this point in time that there has not been sufficient debate on this, so I will allow it to continue a bit longer.

0910

I refer back to the minister. You're finished? Okay.

Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, Speaker, I wasn't scheduled to be speaking this morning but colleagues of mine were. I want to talk about my friend from Leeds-Grenville, who gave up an awful lot of his summer to work on committee, after first reading of this bill in the prior session of this Legislature, and how absolutely shocked I am that a bill of this magnitude, which changes absolutely everything about how parties raise money and prepare for elections, something that is worlds apart from anything that we've ever had in this province—and this government, which talked about wanting to give this the fullest of the Legislature's attention and allow the fullest participation in Ontario's history on a bill of this nature, that their first tangible act, when they had a chance in the new session, was to move to close off debate on this bill—

Mr. Steve Clark: Choke off.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —to choke off debate, to choke off democracy, to gag every member of this House who is not one of theirs. How in the name of what is right and just and fair can they proceed in that manner? It is unconscionable that they would move closure on a bill of this nature. I have had very few members of this caucus speak on this piece of legislation that affects every single one of us, and not only every one of us, but every one of our potentially nominated candidates in this province, and we're going to close off debate because the government doesn't want to talk about it anymore? I am almost without words. I'm almost speechless, and for me to say I'm almost speechless is saying something, but that's where you've put me in the context of this bill. Shame on you people over there. Recant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand this morning and speak to the attempt by the Wynne government to bring closure to this very important piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that we all haven't had a real opportunity to speak to yet.

I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs just tried some Liberal math when he said that more than half of the members of the Legislature have spoken to this bill, and he used that as evidence to try to shut down debate by invoking closure. But the fact of the matter is, Speaker, that the opposition members haven't had adequate opportunity to speak. When he uses numbers, it's because the Liberals, instead of speaking for 20 minutes or 10 minutes, break up the rotation into five-minute blocks. So by sheer numbers—and they have the most people in the Legislature—they have numbers that speak but not for a great length of time. So the members of the opposition who would like an opportunity to have their 10 minutes to say what they feel is important about this bill or inadequate about this bill have not had that opportunity.

So, Speaker, thank you for saving democracy in this House this morning. Thank you for standing up for the democratic rights and principles of the opposition parties in the Ontario Parliament, because once again we've seen the Wynne government try to shut us down, try to shut us up, try to gag us from bringing forth the voices of the ridings that we represent across this great province. We have voices that want to be heard on this bill, and when they bring in closure, when they try to stifle debate and shut us down, those voices are kicked in the pants; those voices are disregarded. We are here to bring those voices forward.

I say once again, Speaker, thank you for standing up for democracy in this Parliament this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: It's a pleasure this morning to join this debate.

In response to what the member from Renfrew-Pembroke had to say, that he was almost

speechless, all I wanted to say was that I can't imagine the member being speechless ever. I'm quite sure that he will always have an opinion, and that's a good thing, because as MPPs, that's what we were elected for.

I do want to say that I believe we have had sufficient debate on this bill. I think we all agree with the intent of the bill. We had extensive consultations over the summer. I want to thank all of the members from all the parties who worked through the summer on this very important bill.

The member from Windsor—

Mr. Steve Clark: Tecumseh.

Hon. Dipika Damerla:—Tecumseh said that he has an important voice to add to this debate, and to speak on behalf of his constituents. I absolutely agree that we all have to speak on behalf of our constituents, but the fact does remain that a time comes when we've all spoken enough and we're not adding anything new to the debate.

We have to recognize that we are a voice for Ontarians but Ontarians have their own voice as well, and they had that chance over the summer. Over the summer Ontarians, including the good constituents of Windsor–Tecumseh, had the chance to speak directly to the committees that were travelling across Ontario.

In fairness, given the significant level of consultations we did directly with Ontarians to hear their views, as well as the reasonable amount of time MPPs have had to voice their opinions on this bill, I do believe that it's now time to move ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is with profound disappointment that I stand here today as the government wants to shut down debate on an issue that could actually impact the democratic institutions we hold dear here in the province of Ontario.

Let me tell you why. A fundamental part of how we arrive here at Queen's Park as members of the assembly is by winning elections. In order to win elections or to compete in an election, you must raise money. The government, although they may not want to hear this, has to understand that people who invest in us as candidates don't do so for cash-for-access. No, that's what the government has been caught doing.

Rather, the people who live in Nepean–Carleton or anywhere else in this province who want to invest in myself or the member from Windsor–Tecumseh or the member from Mississauga–Streetsville want to give their \$50 or \$100 at a barbecue or a corn boil or a spaghetti supper.

I think it's unfortunate that the government doesn't want to listen to our concerns. In fact, I really wanted to talk today about growing up in Nova Scotia and going to political events with my father, and how that sparked within me, as a young 14-year-old girl, a path to public life. To look here today and not be able to contribute to this debate and add my views—is something that the government doesn't quite seem to grasp as something fundamental to how we operate in Ontario.

This is the same government that evades accountability—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We have a point of order. I recognize the member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I believe we don't have a quorum to continue the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Can we stop the clock? Thank you.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We'll resume questions and comments. I return to the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to point out that the government wasn't actually here for the debate, yet they want to continue to shut it down. I believe, as a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, that I should have my 10 minutes or 20 minutes in a rotation to talk about this, I think, democratically fundamental piece of legislation that is important for each of us in this assembly to have our say on. Liberal MPPs have come to speak to me and have asked me to intervene with the government. But, no. Do you know something? They don't have—

0920

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Name names.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Bob Delaney.

Anyway, ladies and gentlemen, the reality here is that the government is not prepared to pass this legislation with the voices of the assembly; rather, they want to shut it down and they don't want us to be part of this debate, and I am personally disgusted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I can't believe the minister had the opportunity to rebut some of the comments and chose not to.

Again, this morning, the government tried to close down debate on Bill 2. It's an extremely important bill. As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, I spent the lion's share of the summer at this committee. We heard from dozens of individuals, including our independent officers of the Legislature. I wanted to mention that, because it's very important. This government seems to have a problem dealing with those non-partisan agents of the Legislature. We just saw yesterday, yet again, this government having a fight with our own Auditor General and deciding to table the estimates without an audit.

I'm the critic for tourism, culture and sport, and I've dealt a lot with the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We require a non-profit organization to get an audited financial statement to qualify for Trillium, and yet this government will table their estimates without the check-

off from the Auditor General. It just shows you that they can't be trusted with the public purse.

I wanted to tell you on the record, Speaker, that on this very important bill, I'm only the sixth member of our caucus that has had an opportunity to put comments on the record. There were 22 members who are still—many members who are here today in our caucus are willing and able to speak on this bill and I would ask that the government, again—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know what? You can chirp all you want over there, but the fact of the matter is we've only had six members speak to this bill, and there were a number of recommendations that were tabled at committee this summer and were ignored by this government.

I just want to take this opportunity to remind government members, who are quite vocal over there, that it was only media reports that really put this issue on the forefront. I want to recognize one member of the media, Adrian Morrow of the *Globe and Mail*, who did a remarkable job uncovering this government's cash-for-access schemes that they've been purporting for many, many years.

I want to quote from one of our deputants at our Kingston hearing, the honourable John Gerretsen, former Attorney General for the province. He's someone who I think most people know that I've known for many years. He was the mayor of Kingston back in the 1980s when I was the mayor of Brockville. We spent a lot of time at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario meetings. He gave a very candid deputation in Kingston before the committee when the bill was in its previous incarnation, Bill 201. He was very honest. In fact, I credit him and Dwight Duncan for really exposing this government's decisions on fundraising.

I want to read to you what John Gerretsen said. I want to use it as premise for my comments today. Here's his quote from that day: "I can tell you, no matter what legislation you're going to come up with, the financial spin doctors in each one of your parties—and I mean each one of your parties—are going to try to come up with ways as to how to circumvent that or how to find the loopholes. It's just the reality of the situation." I thought of this comment yesterday when his successor, the member for Kingston and the Islands, made some comments. I never thought of this. When Yasir Naqvi set up Lou Rinaldi to read this statement to derail Bill 201's hearings, the fact that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would just like to remind the member that when we are referring to other members, please refer to them by their ridings and not by their names. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes.

When the Attorney General set up the member for Northumberland–Quinte West to read that statement at committee, to totally derail it, it really showed how desperate this government is. The fact that they would table amendments that they still haven't shown—there's not one member in this Legislature who knows, when this bill gets to committee, what amendments the

government is going to put forward, not one member on this side of the House. Maybe some of the members on that side of the House know what they're tabling. To say that MPPs can't attend fundraisers and yet don't table that—I attended a fundraiser in my riding last Thursday for the Rotary Club. Am I allowed to attend that fundraiser? Or are we only talking about political fundraisers?

The member for Kingston and the Islands really opened my eyes because I think this is what the government is talking about. She said, "It is important for our constituents to have access, and having fundraisers or having events where it is a cost-recovery basis I think is going to allow a lot more people to engage with us." Here's the kicker, Speaker. Here's her next sentence: "If some choose, after the fact, to contribute financially, that's great."

Let me get this straight. The Minister of Energy quoted one of my fundraisers in the House the other day. I was a little shocked because it wasn't actually a particularly good fundraiser. I think one of the tickets for his cash-for-access fundraiser far exceeds what I made on that. But the one thing he talked about was my two colleagues Senator Bob Runciman and MP Gord Brown. There's an event in my riding, *Afternoon in the Islands*. It's been going for 30 years. It's basically a community event. We make a little bit of money. It's a \$150 fundraiser. We probably give a tax receipt for maybe \$60 because it's a high-value fundraiser. Many of my constituents come, probably more constituents than anyone else. It's not like the government's, where a minister has all of his cash-for-access—brings all his stakeholders.

If I read Ms. Kiwala's comments correctly, I should charge \$90 for *Afternoon in the Islands* next year. And then if people want to give \$60 afterwards, if they want to contribute that, that's how the government's going to continue. I really got my eyes opened by the member for Kingston and the Islands yesterday when she said, again—I want this on the record again: "It is important for our constituents to have access, and having fundraisers or having events where it is a cost-recovery basis I think is going to allow a lot more people to engage with us. If some choose, after the fact, to contribute financially, that's great." You know what? If that member thinks that's great, then that's totally missing what her lieutenant there, the Attorney General, said when he set up the member for Northumberland–Quinte West to talk to committee.

If we can't debate a bill for five weeks in the summer and hear from dozens of deputants, and actually have a government that's willing to defend their amendments and put them in the original bill, then there's something wrong. And I want to thank my colleague in committee the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I respect the Speaker's ruling but I do believe that to have a summer of committee, where we hear from so many people, and then you don't even have the guts to table your own amendments to a bill—what does that say for a government that's out of touch and out of control? I think, in 2018, they're going to be out of office. That's what I think.

In the little bit of time I have left I want to talk about two things that aren't in the bill. Banning government advertising: I said many, many times during this committee meeting, when Bill 201 was debated—now Bill 2—that the government should look to other jurisdictions. They just had an election in Manitoba. They had a three-month ban on government advertising. I asked many deputants if they agreed; many of them did agree. This government, when they tabled amendments, didn't listen to the opposition. They put a 60-day amendment. I hope that the government members will agree that the Manitoba rules were good rules, and they should be incorporated by this government.

But there's one glaring omission in this bill. Again, I don't understand what the problem is with this government and the Auditor General. I don't understand why every other Legislature seems to have a respectful relationship with the Auditor General. This government had the opportunity at first reading—I want to remind people that the reason this bill went out at first reading was because the Premier said that she wanted to have a co-operative venture with the three parties, that she wanted to have a free discussion, that she wanted to have other ideas brought forward. Outside the scope of that bill, we had the opportunity to give the Auditor General back her powers when it comes to government advertising, something that the lion's share of deputants agreed on with us. This government shut it down. This government would not support giving the Auditor General back her powers.

0930

I want to thank the New Democrats. I think the New Democrats and Conservatives worked very well in committee. I think we grasped what people wanted: They wanted cash-for-access to end. They wanted more power back to the independent officers.

I'm sick and tired of this government trying to shut down debate. Let debate continue with this bill. What are you hiding? What are you afraid of?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Again, thank you for standing up for democracy here this morning and fighting against the attempt to prorogue debate on this bill by bringing in closure.

As I mentioned the first time when they said more than half the members of the Legislature have spoken to this bill already, we heard from the member from Leeds–Grenville that only six out of 28 members of his caucus have had the opportunity to speak to this bill so far. I can relate to you that only six out of 20 members of the third party have had an opportunity to speak to this bill so far. So on this side of the House, even with your Liberal math, there has been a dozen. Twelve of us have had the opportunity to speak at length on this bill, while you guys get up and share your five minutes, and all of a sudden, you do the math and it adds up to more than half the members of the Legislature, because you guys are sharing your time in five-minute blocks.

We don't have that opportunity. We need our time to voice the opinions that we hear from the people we represent. I admire how you guys are good at redirection. I admire how you get away from cash-for-access and the quota system put on ministers for fundraising. All that goes out the window when you bring in individual MPPs holding fundraisers. That's what people start talking about.

But that is not at issue. At issue is your conflict of interest, your quota system and your disregard for fundraising in Ontario. You've brought to it a new low—not a new high, a new low—and that's why we have to stand up and call you out on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: There's an awful lot of crocodile tears over there. You'd think that these parties had never fundraised in their life, and that simply just isn't true.

Interjections.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Obviously what we have here, Speaker, is some improvements to the fundraising system in the province of Ontario. That's what the public wants.

Now I'm led to believe that the PCs have had 60% of their caucus speak, not six members, like the member said. I think there's maybe a dispute on the facts here. Either way, it's time to move on. The public of Ontario wants these improvements made. The opposition should quit stalling them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's interesting that the government now wants to cut off debate. They rushed this in. They got caught, and it's as simple as that. They got caught with \$10,000-a-seat fundraisers, \$15,000-a-seat fundraisers, and now they're trying to stop me from having mine. Last Thursday, I had one—\$40 a plate for our fundraiser. Now I can't attend that. I'm not sure, but I haven't signed very many contracts when it comes to government.

We see time after time where they have gotten caught. Just two weeks ago, we heard the Premier stand up and say, "There will be no more ministers attending expensive fundraisers." First of all, we found out there was. They had to update their website, because they got caught in that one. But then we found out her chief of staff was at a fundraiser, along with senior ministry people, with \$10,000-a-seat plates. Did they just go because they wanted to see a movie or something?

You can't trust this government. When you think that they're sounding like they're on the high and mighty about what they're going to do to straighten things out—and then we find out they're sending arguably the second most influential person in this province. This goes to show that they got caught with their donations; corporations were given large contracts for wind and solar—was it \$1.3 million they got back?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: What's that? About a sixth of your debt was paid off from one sector after the last election? We don't have those powers; we have to rely on the pancake breakfasts. Last week, we had a nice turkey supper—\$40 to get in.

People are upset. I can't repeat what some people in my riding are saying to do to this government, because people are mad. I guess they don't want to hear us tell these stories, but people are mad.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to rise and bring the voice of my constituents of Windsor West to this House, whether the Liberal side wants to hear it or not.

I find it interesting that when the Minister of Labour got up to speak, he talked about crocodile tears from this side of the House. I think that goes to show the total disregard and the arrogance—the disregard for our constituents and the arrogance of the Liberal government when they're saying we're crying crocodile tears because we want our constituents to be heard. If they really wanted to hear our constituents—and I appreciate that the committee travelled during the summer down to Windsor, but the fact of the matter is they did it in the middle of summer when often people are off on vacation. That's the only time that they have off. They're off trying to have some quality time with their families. They did it in the middle of the day when a lot of independent business owners couldn't attend, when a lot of people that work during the day cannot come out because, frankly, thanks to the Liberal government, they cannot afford to take time off to come out to a committee and speak.

Frankly, it was a farce. It was not really consultation. Every time somebody voiced their concerns about the bill that the government side had brought forward—the suggestions the government brought forward—they actually shut that person down and challenged them because they didn't agree with them.

So I would say to the minister that perhaps next time you get up to speak about the people on this side of the House not wanting debate shut down, wanting our constituents' concerns heard, that you have the respect that our constituents need and not say that we're sitting over here boo-hooing because we want our constituents heard. Perhaps, Minister, that's why you no longer have a Liberal cabinet minister in Windsor West.

I think that we do need to have more debate on this, whether they want to hear it or not. They've had their opportunity to spread out their time amongst as many members as they want, and that's probably because their members really have nothing of substance to add to the debate because they're not listening to their constituents. I can't support shutting down debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Leeds–Grenville for final comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank all members for their comments. I know that the government House leader has some new members of their staff and they may have given the Minister of Labour talking points about

how many of our members not just debated but also did questions and comments. I only spoke about members who made speeches for the debate, which were Mr. Hillier, Mr. Walker, Mr. Fedeli, Mr. Miller, Mr. Barrett and myself. That's the facts.

I do want to acknowledge what the members for Windsor talked about. Both of them made some great comments. The member for Windsor West did talk about the fact that they were in the middle of the day. The thing that no one has acknowledged yet—this is new debate for you Liberals over there—is the fact that many of those meetings were cancelled because of lack of interest. One of our dates in Ottawa was cancelled; our day in Windsor was shortened to basically an hour. The meeting in Ottawa—there were meetings in Toronto and Hamilton that were cancelled as well. So she's right; when you have hearings in the summer, that's what you deal with.

I would hope that the government would have a lot of hearings on this, again, to get those comments, because I know a number of people were disappointed that their recommendations were not listened to. Again, my question is, why hasn't the government tabled the amendments that they've talked about since that last session in Toronto? Why are they hiding those amendments that would deal with members and fundraising? I had to read Hansard and listen to the debate to get an insight into how the member for Kingston and the Islands feels this cost-recovery event should take place. I've had people ask me if I Skype into fundraising. When we're on the St. Lawrence and they're on the banks of the St. Lawrence, do I drive by in a boat, weigh anchor and make a speech out in the harbour?

Some of these things, these concepts, are crazy. The government has to come clean. What are you hiding?

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am also honoured to add my voice to the debate. I want to just, before I begin, give a particular shout-out to the media and journalists like Adrian Morrow for their strong investigative research and their ability to bring this story forward. It was very much the media that fuelled this issue.

It's important for us to reflect on the context. The problem was twofold. One, there was strong evidence that the government was conducting cash-for-access, much like the member before me spoke about—that particular issue, that there was cash-for-access to ministers who made government decisions. That's very important to make that distinction. It wasn't cash-for-access to someone who wasn't able to make a government decision, who wasn't in a position of cabinet; it was a very specific issue that the journalists were able to focus on.

The problem is that we expect, Ontarians expect, that the government will make decisions that are in the best interests of the people, not decisions based on who attends the fundraiser. When there is a very clear perception that cash is being provided to have simple access to a minister and that specific stakeholders that deal with

a particular ministry are being specifically targeted just for access, it starts raising this perception that the government is not conducting itself in a manner that is appropriate.

The second concern was conflict of interest. I was able to raise this concern and I was very thankful for the Integrity Commissioner's response. The current laws don't govern this concern that was raised, and it's important to note that. We noted that the current laws, as the Integrity Commissioner pointed out, don't cover this scenario. We needed to add some amendments to make sure they're addressed. The government did not accept those amendments.

What was the problem? There was one specific scenario where it became very apparent that there was some—whether it was actual impropriety; certainly there was the perception of impropriety: the sale of Hydro One. That's a particular scenario where we know very clearly—independent evidence suggests and a policy basis suggests—that the sale of Hydro One does not benefit the people of Ontario. No one believes that it benefits Ontario. As much as the Premier stands up and says, “Oh, this is to benefit the people by broadening ownership,” there's nothing broader than every single person in the province of Ontario. So that argument doesn't make sense.

The second argument that we need to sell off a revenue-generating asset in order to raise funds to build infrastructure was shot down as being illogical and unaffordable—in fact, the most expensive and wasteful way to raise money. We have not the opinion of the NDP or the Conservatives; we have the opinion of the Financial Accountability Officer, who makes it very clear that this is the worst way to raise money, and, in fact, it is going to put the province into a worse financial position.

You have a decision that's going to put the province in a worse position. You have a decision that doesn't benefit the people of Ontario. Who does it benefit? A small group of lawyers and bankers named the syndicate. This very same group throws a massive fundraiser for the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Finance, the two ministers responsible for the sale. That has a serious perception of being a conflict, and that serious perception of a conflict is what brought about the concern.

The government has not addressed this direct concern. This is the issue that's of concern, but what is the government doing instead? The government is limiting the voice of communities of citizens who want to get together as an association and complain about government policies or specifically just raise a concern. We put forward amendments saying, “Listen, we understand there's a concern with partisan third-party ads. If someone says you must vote for so-and-so party or you should vote for a particular candidate, there are concerns with that.” But if a community gets together and says, “Listen, we want the people of our province, the people in our community, to consider the environment in the next election. We want people to consider funding for autism in the next election”—generally speaking, policies

that they care about—those are now banned by this government. So the community can't get together and say, “Hey, we think that child care is an important issue for us to look at.” They're not saying which party to vote for, they're not saying which candidate to vote for, but this is banned by this government.

What's not banned, Mr. Speaker? In 2015, the government took away the power, the oversight of the Auditor General to say, “Particular government ads are overly partisan and should not be played, should not move forward.” That's allowed; the government can do that. The government can put forward any ad they want and have no oversight or scrutiny. Before, for an ad that was proposed by the government, the Auditor General would look at it and say, “Do you know what? This ad does not advance any sort of policy for the people. It's clearly partisan in nature. It's clearly just a self-congratulatory message. That's not an appropriate use of public dollars.” That was a strong oversight mechanism that this government got rid of. This bill, which purports to protect against perceptions of conflict of interest, which purports to protect against the very problems that were raised by the journalists, including cash-for-access, does not reintroduce that oversight. Again, the government can do any sort of ads they want without any scrutiny, without anyone saying that that ad is—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Partisan.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —partisan in nature.

It's another example of how this bill is silencing the people of the province who might want to raise a particular issue but allowing the government to continue to use public dollars for partisan advertisements. That continues in this bill.

In addition, the government has signalled a complete lack of understanding of the real issue here. The heart of the issue is that people who are in cabinet, people who are ministers, who have direct influence over decisions the government makes are in a completely different position than those who are not. Backbenchers and opposition members are an absolutely different scenario. When ministers or cabinet members can make decisions that affect the province, there must be a separate analysis with respect to how they can do that, how they can interact with the public in terms of fundraising and interact with private interest groups in terms of fundraising, and how that should not impact their decision-making. There is a colossal difference between a cabinet member and a minister and an opposition member or a backbencher. That's where this government completely fails to understand the severity of the situation.

In fact, I have a great quote from Konrad Yakabuski—I know he's no relation to our own member, the Conservative member—from an article, “How Low Can the Ontario Liberals Go? Just Watch Them.” It's a Globe and Mail article and a very powerful summary. This is the reporter speaking: “The average MPP holding a \$100-a-ticket potluck has little direct power and those who attend such events know it. They are there to support an individual and his or her agenda in an entirely legitimate

manifestation of the democratic process. When the energy minister invites a few electricity-sector executives to a private dinner in exchange for thousands of dollars in donations, however, you know said executives don't show up to talk about the weather." The reporter clearly gets the difference.

There is a massive difference. The proposals by this government don't address that. The proposals by this government don't address the problem, which is cash-for-access. The government doesn't address the perception of conflict of interest. The government rejected many amendments which would have addressed the conflict of interest.

In addition, the government rejected amendments that would address lobbying and change the way lobbying is done so that there can be some clear guidelines around that to address the real heart of the problem, which is the cash-for-access and the conflict-of-interest issues. Again, the government has not addressed those issues.

If we summarize it, the problem with all of this is, at the end of the day, people are becoming cynical, and have become cynical, about politics. When the government fuels the cynicism by completely avoiding the root problem, they're actually assisting in creating a system where people are less and less likely to vote. What happens is that allows the status quo to remain, and the status quo is the cynicism that has fuelled the whole thing from the beginning. That's why it's so important for us to take this issue seriously and to address it in a meaningful way. It is our duty to restore that trust in the public administration and to restore that trust in politicians, and this government is failing to do that.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about the elections financing act and to address some of the comments that the members opposite have made, including the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

The member opposite talked about addressing the issue of fundraising in a meaningful way. I want to point out that our elections financing act is historic in many ways because what this act tries to do and attempts to do is actually change the way politics is done in Ontario and change the way that we fundraise in Ontario.

I find it interesting that the members opposite are spending most of their time talking about time and time allocation, and not necessarily about this financing act. Why? Because I—frankly, one of the members opposite talked about cynicism. Well, I'm feeling a little bit cynical about what the reasons are behind this attempt to talk about time allocation and not about the fact that what we're doing here is stopping the hosting of large-scale fundraisers, banning corporate and union donations entirely, and ensuring that fundraising events for all MPPs, candidates, party leaders, contestants and so on—bringing forward an amendment about that.

It really is going to change the way we fundraise. That's what the people of Ontario have told us they

wanted, and that's actually what the opposition parties told us they wanted. And yet, when the time comes to discuss what's on the table and move this important bill ahead and bring closure to it so we can act on it, we are being stalled—and I find that that is really where the questions are about who is committed to ensuring that we do the right thing in terms of fundraising in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today and give comment on the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton on the election financing statute law that's before us today.

We certainly want to have a level playing field for political financing legislation. That's not the point. The point is, the Liberal government—and I think, listening to some of their backbenchers and even some of their ministers, they're really not getting the impact that this is having. This is actually changing democracy.

When they say that backbench MPPs and opposition MPPs can't attend their own fundraisers, that's taking away the right of democracy that we have in the province of Ontario—because those people willingly want to participate. Do you think that they're coming to my local fundraiser, whether it be a breakfast or a spring dinner or a golf tournament, and thinking that I'm influencing government legislation?

You have overreached your authority as the Liberal government and as caucus members. As they say, your hand got caught in the cookie jar—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Can you address the Chair, please?

Ms. Laurie Scott: —because you had at least \$10,000-a-plate dinners—I'm sure it was much more—

Interjection: Fifteen sometimes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It was \$15,000 sometimes—with cabinet ministers. That same company then made, in the case of the wind companies, a \$1.3-million donation to the Liberal Party and then got millions of dollars' worth of contracts. That's what you got caught doing. You overreacted, and you're denying the people within our ridings access to participate in democracy by saying you can't have a little fundraiser where maybe you'd make \$10 or \$20.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, if you don't know that that's what you're doing, that is what you're doing; I'll just tell you.

The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton did a great job. I just want to clarify that the article he read from the *Globe and Mail*—Konrad Yakabuski is John Yakabuski's brother. I just wanted to put that comment at the end for the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before I move to further questions and comments, I would just like to remind all members in the House that when we are debating or in questions and comments—I would ask that you, again, address the Speaker as opposed to individuals. Address me as a third party, all right?

Moving forward, we have further questions and comments. I recognize the member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to stand in the House and listen to the debate brought forward by the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton because he tells a story. He describes in a very articulate way the premise of what the problem is.

Today he talked about the election act. One thing he highlighted which was very clear—and I was hoping the government would have listened to the explanation—was access to government officials. What he said was that cabinet ministers would have fundraisers of an exorbitant amount, and they are the decision-makers of legislation.

Cabinet ministers have fundraisers of exorbitant amounts, and they're decision-makers: In that premise alone, there is an issue, and the issue is that we don't have oversight now when it comes to that.

Conflict of interest is an important part of what we do here as legislators. To not have that in a bill is highly problematic. I don't understand this government's inability to self-reflect on this legislation and understand that that is a fundamental wrong that needs to be corrected.

If nothing else, we need the debate to drive it home to this Wynne government that they haven't been listening to the people that they represent, and people are telling them—we, as conduits for our constituents, are here in this Legislature telling, debating with this government—they have to correct this legislation.

They didn't listen to people in committee, as we heard. They shut them down and told them what was best. Speaker, the people know what's best, and they've spoken.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again, Speaker, for allowing me to join this debate.

This is very straightforward. If it's passed, it's going to: ban corporate and union donations; it's going to lower the maximum contribution to \$1,200 for nomination contestants—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: —or a constituency association, \$1,200 for a candidate and \$1,200 for a leadership contestant; it lowers the maximum contribution from \$33,250 to just \$3,600, about a 90% reduction; and it places restrictions on third-party advertising.

Either you agree with that or you don't.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

I'd like to remind members in the Legislature this morning that it's very important that I'm able to hear the speaker. When I have cross-conversations going on and when I ask them to come to order and they don't, then I can start naming—well, not naming, but I'll start

referring to you by your riding. Please keep it down so that I'm able to hear the speaker.

We'll continue with the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's time to move on, basically. I made my point, Speaker. We know what the bill will do. People have asked us to make changes to the election finances in the province of Ontario. That's exactly what we're doing. I don't think it should be stalled anymore. It's time to move on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for final comments.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you for the applause and thank you to all the members who spoke and shared in the debate.

I also want to correct my record. I apologize for mistakenly not attributing the phenomenal writer Konrad Yakabuski as being the Conservative member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's brother. So that correction is now made.

Mr. Steve Clark: Younger brother.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Younger brother. Interesting.

I think it's important, again, to highlight in my response that there are two key issues here that the government needs to address in this legislation.

One is the cash-for-access component, to ensure that decision-makers, those who can control the direction of this province, those who control the purse strings—the decision-makers, the cabinet ministers—that cash-for-access principle should be completely dealt with. This government has not dealt with that. That is a serious problem.

The second one is the perception of conflict of interest. When fundraising results in decision-making, when there are stakeholders in a particular file that deal with a particular ministry, and their fundraising results in or has the perception of resulting in decisions that benefit that stakeholder group and not the people of Ontario, that's a serious issue, and that's the second issue that needs to be addressed.

Neither of these issues have been addressed by this legislation. Numerous amendments brought forward by the opposition to address these two particular issues were rejected.

1000

Again, another key issue that needs to be addressed that this government has not addressed is, absolutely, it's important to ban union and corporate donations, but we need to ban partisan government ads. This bill had the opportunity to do that, but it doesn't do it. In fact, the Auditor General still cannot apply her scrutiny or her oversight to any advertisements to ensure that they're not partisan. She can't do that. The government withdrew that ability in 2015. That's why it's so important that we add in these amendments to make sure this government is held accountable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Labour has so eloquently said, this debate has been going on for some time now. I think it has reached the hours now where it's time to move on. It's an important bill, and it's a bill that needs to get to committee, and we need to do more work on it. As a result, I move that this question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of Economic Development and Growth has moved that the question now be put. Having considered the amount of time that it has been debated, now over 10 hours and 25 minutes and 28 speakers, I'm satisfied there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House. Therefore, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question now be put, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion that the question now be put, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. A recorded vote being required, this vote will now be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

BURDEN REDUCTION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT DU FARDEAU RÉGLEMENTAIRE

Mr. Duguid moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to reduce the regulatory burden on business, to enact various new Acts and to make other amendments and repeals / Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau réglementaire des entreprises, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. I'm going to be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Davenport, whose speech, I'm sure, will probably be a heck of a lot more exciting than mine. This may not be the most exciting topic that we'll ever discuss in this Legislature, but it's an important one. It's about reducing the costs of businesses and the time that businesses take by reducing administrative burden on our businesses across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I got up this morning, and I was a little anxious. I've got to tell you—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I got up this morning too.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm glad that the member opposite got up as well.

I was a little anxious, I have to admit, but it wasn't because I was anxious that I would be speaking on this bill. I'm actually anxious about what's going to happen tonight with the Blue Jays, and I think we all are. So my prediction, Mr. Speaker, let me say right off the top, is

the Jays are going to win because they've been there before and they have the experience, but it's going to be a tight game and I think we'll all be very nervous throughout that. I wanted to say, right off the top, on behalf of all of us in the Legislature: Good luck, Jays. We hope you win tonight. Go, Jays, go. That's something I think—it may be the only thing today we'll have unanimity on, but I think we have unanimity on that. In honour of the Jays—not in honour of my friends opposite, but in honour of the Jays—I wore my blue tie today as well. Not that I'm afraid to wear blue ties. The Deputy Premier is wearing blue as well, so we're all in this together.

Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today not of the Blue Jays but of the Burden Reduction Act. If passed, this act would support Ontario ministries in updating legislation to remove unintended burdens on businesses and to create savings in businesses for both government and other stakeholders.

It reduces and streamlines unnecessary regulatory burden. I want to say right at the outset, because it's important: When we're reducing regulatory burden and when we're reducing regulations, we are paying great attention to ensure that we're not lowering standards for safety. The Minister of Labour pays close attention to these things. We're not impacting safety in workplaces or employment standards. We're not, in any way, demeaning or decreasing employment standards or consumer protections. I sit beside a former minister of consumer protection, and we make sure, as we're reducing regulatory burden, that we're reducing what we call unnecessary regulatory burden. But when it comes to standards across the province, we have to make sure that we have strong standards in this province. We make sure they're competitive. We make sure they're as easy as possible for businesses to comply with, but we make sure that public protections are in place. I always like to say that at the outset just to make sure that nobody gets the wrong idea about what we're trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking a number of individuals and organizations that have contributed to this bill. This is not a bill that was put together just in the backrooms here at Queen's Park; this is a bill that comes through a ton of consultation with our business community that's ongoing. The members opposite and all my colleagues will, from time to time, hear from businesses or organizations in the province—or even ministries and different organizations across our land—that there are things that we put in their way that really impede their ability to compete as well as they can and should. That's the kind of thing that we tackle.

We've had an incredible amount of feedback and input from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, whose actual suggestion it was for us to do these kinds of bills on an annual basis. That's what we're going to do.

What this does is it provides a window for our government to bring forward opportunities to reduce regulatory burden. In the past, you might have a great idea. It might not be huge. It might impact a small part of a small sector, but it still matters to that small part of a small

sector. It could be a small part of a small business sector. It still matters to them. But you can't put forward a piece of legislation just for that one thing because it would grind the Legislature to a halt. That's why, what we've done with this bill is, we create a window. We'll be doing that on an annual basis.

It is a recommendation from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that we have this vehicle so that we can be streamlined in our approach to attacking regulatory burden and reducing regulatory burden. This gives us, in government—and it gives the opposition an opportunity to participate as well. I'm always open to suggestions from the opposition on ways we can reduce regulatory burden. I can't think of anything more non-partisan than reducing regulatory burden—because it's not like people vote for politicians or governments because of a regulatory Burden Reduction Act. It's not a vote-getter. But when you talk to the business community, it's something very important to them. So I want to thank the CFIB for their leadership in working with us as we move forward.

I also want to thank Allan O'Dette and his team at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Speaker, we work arm in arm with them as well. They're always keen for us to make these changes and these moves. He has been very, very helpful.

I want to thank Jan De Silva from the Toronto Region Board of Trade. She has been crucial to our efforts to put this bill together in our overall Open for Business efforts.

I also want to thank Ian Howcroft from Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. He's been very involved with our efforts, not just in this bill, but our Open for Business—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What a contributor.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member opposite says that Ian Howcroft is a good contributor, and he is. He works very hard to ensure that the voice of our manufacturing sector is heard here at Queen's Park. The good news is that it continues to be heard in our Open for Business efforts. Ian Howcroft has done a wonderful job making sure that happens.

I also want to thank Flavio Volpe. I may have time, Mr. Speaker—I probably won't, because time is starting to run out—to speak a little bit more about some of the work that the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association has done. They were the first sector that we turned to for our Red Tape Challenge, which is a brand new, Open Government effort, modelled after an effort that worked very well in Great Britain, where a sector can participate and give us their feedback online on how to reduce regulatory burden in that particular sector.

Why that's important is that, in the past, we've had some great success saving hundreds of millions of dollars for businesses by sitting at round tables with the business sector and tackling five or six items that were important to that particular sector, bringing it forward, committing to do it and getting it done. We've been able to reduce dozens of regulatory burdens through that process. It's become a bit of a global best practice, so we'll continue to do that work.

But what that doesn't do is it doesn't reach out to the front line of businesses. Your typical small business person isn't sitting around those tables. We'll have a representative from small businesses there. It doesn't reach out to everyday Ontarians or workers and unions and front-line workers in some of these businesses, who have something to say about red tape and may well have some great ideas for us. What this does is it reaches out, beyond the confines of our usual round-table-type meetings with sectors and associations, to everyone in the province and gives them an opportunity to participate.

The first Red Tape Challenge with the auto parts community went extremely well. The next Red Tape Challenge now is with the agriculture sector—with the food processing sector, I believe it is. We're looking forward to getting feedback from them as well.

I'm really pleased to move forward with this initiative. I also need to thank my Open for Business team in the ministry. We've completely revamped our ministry to be more proactive and more streamlined when it comes to attacking our Open for Business challenges and our efforts to reduce regulatory burden. In fact, we've re-modeled our entire government in some ways to set up internal mechanisms that move those decisions to the top so that our secretary of cabinet, our business adviser, Ed Clark, and my deputy minister sit on a panel that helps drive from the top down. Usually you'll try to do things from the bottom up. In this case, though, in making change in government, it's important to have it from the top down so that it will encourage ministries to continue to drive changes that reduce burden on business.

My Open for Business team has done a fantastic job. They're a creative group of people. When people think of bureaucrats, they're not your typical public servant bureaucrats. They're really outward-facing, they're really keen to be involved with the business community and they're doing a magnificent job leading our province.

Mr. Speaker, I've probably got a minute left for now. I may well, if I'm back when this comes up for debate, be able to finish. If not, my able parliamentary assistant will when the debate comes back up. But let me finish by thanking my colleagues. Eleven ministries have had input into this bill. This isn't a bill that my ministry has come up with. It's really the 11 ministries that have worked with their sectors that have made these suggestions and put them forward, so I thank those folks in those ministries, my colleagues and their teams for the work they've done on this.

I thank the opposition in advance for the co-operation that they'll probably bring to this because they understand the importance of reducing regulatory burden as well, Mr. Speaker—and I'm looking to you now and I'm assuming that my time is expiring, because I think next in line is question period for the day and that's the most exciting part of the day for many of us in this Legislature. I'll sit down for the moment and we'll see what happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the minister.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15 and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jeff Leal: They'll be arriving shortly to the members' east gallery: I'd like to welcome Randy Hope, who is the chair of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, mayor of Chatham-Kent and former MPP for the Chatham area from 1990 to 1995; Peter Emon, who's the chair of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and, of course, the very distinguished warden of Renfrew county; and, from the OFA, because it's OFA Day here at Queen's Park, President Don McCabe and his colleagues Jessica and Sarah.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Brent Royce, who is a director of the OFA and is here visiting Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some visitors this morning: Candace Rennick, Stella Yeadon, Kevin Bates, Mrs. Joanne Waddell, JoAnne Dure, Preethy Sivakumar and Heather Duff. All of them are members of CUPE. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The minister responsible for women's issues and accessibility.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. We have members of the Ontario Disability Employment Network seated in your gallery: Joe Dale and Diana McCauley. We're expecting others to arrive later: Danette Anthony and Peter Athanasopoulos.

We also have 53 grade 10 students from St. Mary Catholic Secondary School in my great riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. Welcome to all.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Pat Jilesen, a director of the OFA, who will be joining us in the gallery today.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the NDP caucus, I would also like to welcome the directors of the OFA, here today for Agriculture Week.

Hon. Bill Mauro: It gives me great pleasure today to welcome to the Legislature from Thunder Bay my oldest son: Dustin Mauro is visiting here in the members' gallery.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like to welcome today to Queen's Park, from Union Gas, vice-president of business development Jim Redford, Tim Kennedy, Mike Packer and Mark Lawson, and from Enbridge, Cynthia Hansen, Malini Giridhar, Anne Creery and David Donovan.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park grade 4, 5 and 6 students from Shirley Street Public School, and their teacher Ben Porter, from my riding of Davenport. They'll be visiting Queen's Park later on this morning and I look forward to meeting them.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I, too, would like to welcome to Queen's Park today Warden Peter Emon from Renfrew county, who is the chair of the Eastern Ontario

Wardens' Caucus, as well as being the reeve of the town of Renfrew.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I would like to welcome Randy Hope, the mayor of Chatham-Kent, who is here as the warden of the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, as well as Don McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They just came in. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature this morning the family members of Pickering page captain Brendan O'Donnell. Welcome.

I'll start over on my left—but then I'm going to go right to his mother and father and do that first: Caroline Voitovici and John O'Donnell; his brother Liam O'Donnell; his grandmother Colette O'Donnell; grandmother Maria Voitovici—just stand up as I mention your names—and grandfather Josef Voitovici. Welcome to all the Brendan O'Donnell family.

Applause.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you very much. At the same time, I do have a second delegation coming: a young lady by the name of Carion Fenn, who we will welcome to the Legislature as the president and founder of the Carion Fenn Foundation. I had the honour of speaking with her on rare diseases at an expo recently.

I do thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Absolutely.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Mark Reusser from Waterloo region, who is also here with the OFA. Mark, welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure this morning to introduce, from the great municipality of Chatham-Kent, our mayor, Mr. Randy Hope, and his economic development services director, Mr. Michael Burton.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I know he's been introduced—

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I think I'm up. Sorry to our House leader.

I'd like to welcome as well, from the great riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the OFA president, Don McCabe, and the mayor of Chatham-Kent, Randy Hope.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think we're going to try to set a record here, because we know what's going to happen next.

The member from Simcoe-Grey in introductions.

Mr. Jim Wilson: My apologies to my colleague.

I saw him in the building; I don't quite see him in the gallery yet, but Mr. Keith Currie from the great riding of Simcoe-Grey and a vice-president of the OFA is here.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to welcome students from St. Joseph elementary school, from my beautiful riding of Richmond Hill, visiting the House today.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to recognize that a scribe from the Toronto Star has survived another birthday, Martin Regg Cohn, and he doesn't look any worse for wear. He had a birthday yesterday.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's great. We're now heckling the media.

Happy birthday, Regg.

I do have an introduction. I would like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery a friend of mine and an OFA representative, Mr. Larry Davis from Brant. Thank you very much for being with us.

Finally, to try to see if we did hit the record—it is the custom of the Speaker to introduce former members, so the former member from Chatham–Kent in the 35th Parliament, Mr. Randy Hope. Welcome, former member.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Makes you want to come back, eh?

Thank you for the introductions. It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. According to the Auditor General, this is the first time in the history of Ontario that the financial statements have been released without the Auditor General's opinion—an unprecedented action in Ontario's history and incredibly disrespectful to the Auditor General and the people of Ontario.

But were they released without the AG's opinion? That's the big question. Was it because she discovered the government has an \$11-billion hole in their budget? That includes a \$1.5-billion deficit this year. That's a lot of money.

How will the government fill this hole? Is it going to be through new taxes, higher hydro rates, new fees, or will the Liberals just cut services?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me begin by saying go Jays, go Blue Jays.

Mr. Speaker, we were very clear yesterday that we have accepted the Auditor General's numbers for this year. We released the documents, despite the divergence in accounting opinions specific to two pension funds between Treasury Board officials and the auditor, as part of our commitment to openness and transparency, because it was past the date when that information was to be in the public.

In the meantime, we will be consulting with experts on how our pension assets should be accounted for moving forward. Officials will be engaging the expert accounting community to support a full understanding of how that should—

Interjections.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

I'm sure that we have found ourselves almost in the same spot as we had almost every day at the beginning of question period. I would ask that we try not to shout

people down. I just don't think that's an appropriate thing to do and I'll have to deal with that if I get a sense that that's all that's going to happen.

Supplementary, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Every time it looks like the Liberals are hiding something, it becomes just a matter of time until they get caught. First, they tried to hide the cost of the gas plant scandal. We later found out that it cost over a billion dollars. Then the Financial Accountability Officer caught the Liberals when they were supposed to use the funds from the fire sale of Hydro One for transportation and then it goes to the deficit. Now the Auditor General caught them trying to hide an \$11-billion hole in the budget.

I know our grade 6 students are failing in math, but I at least thought the government knew how to count. I expected better from this government. So my question is, directly to the Premier, why has the Auditor General given your government a failing grade on public accounts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to report that using the numbers that were suggested by the Auditor General, what we really showed yesterday was that in fact we have beat our deficit target for the seventh year in a row.

Laughter.

Hon. Liz Sandals: They might consider that a laughing matter; I consider that very important because it shows that what is happening with the province's books and with the province's fiscal performance is that we are in fact managing our economy prudently and we are on target to reach our goal of balancing the budget in 2017-18. We showed that we had a projection originally of an \$8.5-billion deficit; we now have a \$5-billion deficit last year. We beat our projection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: Sometimes I wonder what fantasy world this government is living in. When it comes to believing this government or the Auditor General, I'm with the Auditor General.

This is the Auditor General saying that there is an \$11-billion hole in the budget and they are now an additional \$1.5 billion away from balancing the budget. Why this government continues to ignore and disrespect the Auditor General is beyond me. On the flip side, you have the government saying that everything is fine, that their numbers add up. The Auditor General is saying very clearly that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I made mention of it so now I'm going to start to fulfill it. The Minister of Agriculture, come to order. The Minister of Transportation, come to order. If I do hear any other interjections, I'll deal with those, too, especially when I'm trying to get attention.

Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Instead of ignoring the Auditor General, how is this government going to make up the \$1.5 billion in their current budget? Additionally, how does this government reconcile the fact that they're the first government in Ontario's history to release public accounts without the Auditor General's opinion? It's beyond me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. I'm going to ask that the members on the same side of the questioner not interject as well.

Premier—sorry, president.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let's go over this one more time calmly. When we tabled our budget in 2015, we projected that the 2015-16 year would result in a deficit of \$8.5 billion. When we tabled our current-year budget last spring, 2016, we said the interim projection for a deficit would be \$5.5 billion. What did we actually achieve, using the Auditor General's numbers? We achieved a deficit of \$5 billion. In other words, we beat the budget target, using the Auditor General's numbers, by \$3.5 billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga, come to order.

You do have a wrap-up sentence if you want.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you.

So to me, it is good news that (a) we got the financial information out to the public and (b) that we've beaten our deficit target for seven years in a row.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, I saw first-hand how great the faculty, the facilities and the students are at Yes I Can nursery. I understand why the Premier fought passionately for funding for this wonderful nursery nine years ago. And because of that, I can't understand why this Liberal government has turned its back on Yes I Can. The government has made a decision to cancel its annual funding. It has asked Yes I Can nursery for a wind-down plan. Without provincial support, Yes I Can may have to close its doors and Ontario would lose 130 precious child care spaces.

Why is this Liberal government turning its back on Yes I Can? Do they not appreciate that this is their responsibility? Do not pass the buck. Do not say it's some other level of government. This has always been funded by the province of Ontario for the last nine years. It has been in existence for 26 years, helping children. Don't abandon them.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Far from walking away from this school, which does provide great service to kids—and I have been a champion of the program in north Toronto. It's a great program. In fact, Yes I Can Nursery School receives \$300,000 a year—provincial dollars—that flow to the city and flow to the nursery school. That money continues to flow.

The reality is that for some time, officials in the Ministries of Education and Children and Youth Services have been trying to get the nursery school to sit down with city officials and work to come up with a budget and a sustainability plan. Our provincial officials are perfectly willing to continue to sit with the nursery school, but there does have to be an open budgeting process and there has to be a conversation with the city officials. We're willing to be part of that, but it has to happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier continues to stress that Yes I Can continues to operate and there is some flow-through funding. That is not correct. The local Toronto city councillor in the area said yesterday at the press conference that there is no city mechanism for this autism funding. There is no flow-through funding that can be used. Your local Toronto city councillor is saying you're wrong. This nursery is saying the Premier is wrong. There is only one level of government that is pulling funding, pulling \$150,000 to take care of these children.

It's not right; it's wrong. You fought for these children nine years ago. Why are you abandoning them today? Why?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The way funding for child care and these programs works is that the money from the province flows to the municipality, and the municipality allocates those—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: To support low-income families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Part of it is wage subsidy, part of it is for other programs, but that money flows through to the municipality. That's why it's imperative that Yes I Can sit down with city officials. As I say, provincial officials who have been part of the conversation are perfectly willing to sit down with them to come up with a sustainability plan. But there has to be an open budgeting process, there has to be a sustainability plan, and that has to be done in conjunction with the city officials.

I know Jaye Robinson, who is a city councillor, would understand that that's the process that needs to happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: In the Premier's response—open budgeting process—or speaking lines—they are taking \$150,000 away. That's why it's closing. You've got the local city councillor saying there is no Toronto mechanism. You have a Liberal senator coming down from Ottawa, who is passionate—

Interjection: Jim Munson.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Jim Munson—on autism funding, saying this is the wrong thing for the government to do.

I just don't understand why this government continues to go after these families. First they took families with children with autism to the courts, then they tried to cancel the IBI funding and now you have 130 kids, many of them—most of them—children with autism, and this Premier is abandoning them.

Government is walking away. There's no municipal mechanism. There's no federal mechanism. The funding is provincial and you are abandoning them. It's the wrong thing to do. Stop this attack on children with autism.

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care).

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am pleased to rise today as the Associate Minister of Education to address this.

First of all, I want to make it clear that our government is committed to ensuring that every child has access to the supports that they need. This is so important when it comes to our children during their early years.

Our government is committed to giving our kids the best start in life. That's why we are making historic investments. We're creating another 100,000 licensed child care spaces for zero- to four-year-olds over the next five years. It's a historic investment. We have more than doubled the child care funding to municipalities to over \$1 billion a year. That is why we are also providing funding to the city of Toronto, who then funds a number of local child care programs, including the Yes I Can Nursery School, at \$300,000 a year. We are committed to ensuring that a good program like this gets the support that it needs.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, I asked the Premier about people I met across Ontario who are struggling to pay their hydro bills. They have student loans that they can barely afford. They're paying for child care that's only getting more and more expensive in this province. They're having to stop saving for their kids' education because their bills are simply too high.

The Premier said that she has an enormous amount of sympathy. People don't need sympathy; they need action. Will this Premier stop the privatization of Hydro One and all local utility companies?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reason that I talked about sympathy is because we have taken action and we are taking action to deal with the problems that people are facing in their lives every single day.

The leader of the third party began by talking about tuition. That's exactly why we believe tuition should be free for students from low-income families—150,000 students.

The leader of the third party talked about child care. That's exactly why we think there needs to be more child care, particularly for the zero-to-four years, which is why 100,000 new spaces over five years is critical.

The fact that we are moving to take the provincial portion of the HST off electricity bills, to further reduce bills for people in rural communities and to work with small businesses so that they will have access to conservation initiatives so they can save money—all of that comes out of that sympathy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Whether this Premier chooses to admit it or not, life is becoming more and more unaffordable for the people of this province, all across Ontario. People are already struggling to pay for child care, pay off student loans that they've been paying for a decade, and on top of that, the hydro bill keeps climbing and climbing and climbing.

People don't know what to do. They didn't vote to turn Hydro One or their local utility into private for-profit companies, and they cannot afford for that to happen. Will this Premier stop the sell-off of our hydro system in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, underlying this question, as has been the case for many months now, is an ideological position that argues that we should not build new transit and we should not make investments in new infrastructure by leveraging assets that have been owned by the people of the province for many years—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that we shouldn't make those investments, that we shouldn't invest in new assets for the people of Ontario that are needed in 2016. So we categorically reject that notion. We believe that investing in roads and bridges and transit across the province is necessary. We're demonstrating that those investments are creating economic growth, and we are going to continue to foster economic growth across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, even the Financial Accountability Officer says that the Premier has it wrong. You don't sell off a revenue-generating asset to pay for infrastructure. It's the wrong thing to do. That's not ideology at all; that's just the facts.

But what I really think the Premier needs to know is that all the families in Ontario that I've been talking to are telling us that they cannot afford their hydro bills. They're not alone. The people I met in Kitchener and in Hamilton and in Niagara Falls, they're not alone. It's happening everywhere. They're seeing their bills go up, and their paycheques are staying the same. They can't afford private power generation. They can't afford private power transmission. They can't afford private local utilities.

The Premier is not an innocent bystander in this mess. She can take action, and she needs to take action. Will she stop the sell-off of our electricity system in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party continues to try to conflate these issues, I talked about the need for us to try to make investments in infrastructure, and that's the asset discussion.

If she wants to have the conversation about the electricity price increases, we are very aware that the investments that have been made in order to upgrade the system, in order to have a clean, 90%-emissions-free grid in this province by shutting down the coal-fired plants, by jump-starting a renewable industry—there has been a cost associated with that and the investments that we've made.

So we have put in place programs to address those challenges. We've removed the debt retirement charge from people's bills. We've put in place the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the message has been sent.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit. Most recently, we have announced that we're going to be removing another 8%—the provincial portion of the HST—from people's bills. We understand that we need to take action, and we are.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. If I was looking across the aisle at a Conservative Premier, and they said to me that they wanted to sell off Toronto Hydro and every other local utility, I'd be disappointed but I wouldn't be surprised. People expect Conservatives to privatize. It's in their DNA. That's what they do.

But that's not what the Liberal Party ran on. People were deeply let down when this Premier announced, out of the blue, that she was going to sell off Hydro One. Now everybody is worried that she's actually planning to help privatize their local utilities.

Will this Premier rule out any further sell-offs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I believe that government exists to make decisions in the best interests of the people that it serves. I believe that if a government looks at a province and sees infrastructure that has not been invested in—that has been neglected by subsequent governments that have not paid attention to the economic growth of municipalities and have not made the investments necessary—then it is up to that government to make those investments and to find a practical way to do that.

That is what we have done. We have seen a problem, we have addressed that problem, and what we're seeing now is that Ontario is one of the leaders in the country in economic growth. That's government's responsibility.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People work really hard to save energy, but at the end of the day, people need to turn on the power to cool their homes, to cook their meals, to do their laundry—you name it, Speaker. People need electricity.

When they see the Premier selling off Hydro One and encouraging the sell-off of local utilities like Toronto Hydro, they see a government helping people at the top make a hell of a lot of money while everyone else has to pay the price—I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I need to put it on the record, please. Withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker.

They see a government helping people at the top make a heck of a lot of money, while everyone else has to pay the price. People cannot afford it.

Will this Premier stop her plan to sell off the hydro utilities in this province, as well as stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The other responsibility that government has is to make sure, as decisions are made, that if there are people who need support, we put those supports in place and help people to deal with their expenses on a day-to-day basis. As I have said a number of times, we have put a number of programs in place, including, most recently, announcing that we're taking the provincial portion of the HST off people's bills.

1100

But our responsibility is broader than that. We have to look at other ways that people need support and other ways that they can participate in the economy. For example, making sure that every student in this province has access to post-secondary education no matter what their income: That is the responsibility of government. That's why tuition will be free, starting in September 2017, for 150,000 students from low-income families. Those are the kind of decisions that, taken in a package, mean that we are paying attention to people's needs every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I find it astounding that not once did this Premier say that it's the government's responsibility to listen to the wishes of the 80% of people in this province who don't want to see their public assets sold off.

The Premier wants people to believe that she has nothing to do with the privatization of Toronto Hydro, but she's already giving them—and the finance minister mentioned it yesterday—\$100 million in tax giveaways to facilitate that. She's planning more tax giveaways in the hopes that, by privatizing Toronto Hydro, that move will take the attention away from her own sell-off of Hydro One.

The problem is that there are people across Ontario who can't afford to pay any more. Instead of making things better for them, the Premier's trying to help herself and her party yet again.

Will this Premier admit that she's got no mandate to privatize Hydro One or a single local utility, and stop all the privatization now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, you know, it makes me smile when the leader of the third party talks about helping us and our friends when she references the decision around Hydro One. It was a hard decision. It was a very difficult decision, because it was a practical decision based on a need that we saw as we looked to fulfill our commitment to invest in infrastructure in this province. It was not an easy decision; it's one of those decisions that government has to take in order to be able to move forward.

We took that decision because we know that the neglect that infrastructure in this province has suffered over years—the lack of investment, the digging of holes, the filling in of those holes and the lack of maintenance across the north—had to stop. We had to find the resources to make those investments—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You do have a wrap-up sentence.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We made that decision, and the leader of the third party wants to conflate the issue of that decision and electricity prices. It's just not the case.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. It appears Halloween came early yesterday when the government was so spooked by my question about the public accounts that they treated us to a hastily held technical briefing, a press conference and unaudited financial statements.

This is unprecedented. It has never happened in Ontario before. It showed an \$11-billion hole in their budget, and they tried to hide it by admonishing and undermining the Auditor General, despite the auditor's warning this past June of accounting changes, and then again in the 2015 auditor's report, in chapter 2, which I'll have one of the pages deliver.

The government has been aware of this for quite some time, and Ontarians want to know how this government is going to pay for it. Are they going to cut services to kids with autism? Are there going to be even higher hydro bills, new taxes—or are they going to trick us with all of the above?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think, Speaker, that we should go back to the beginning of the story, which is that while there certainly has been an ongoing discussion between the public servants who do the accounts and the Auditor General—not, I would say, the politicians, for the record—the first notification we got that the Auditor General was rejecting the pension treatment which had currently been used for the last 14 years—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The chief government whip is warned. Particularly when giving an answer, let's not interject, please.

Finish, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: For the past 14 years, since 2001-02, the auditors of Ontario have approved a particular accounting practice for pensions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of—the member for Nepean—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please, I'd like all of us to try to be helpful.

The member from Nepean—Carleton, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We were faced with the situation that the auditor presented us on September 13 with written information that she was rejecting the treatment used for the past—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary, the member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you and good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Auditor General confirmed there's an \$11-billion hole in the government's budget, but rather than co-operating with the Auditor General, the government went into full panic mode with a desperate news conference. Rather than addressing the financial waste and mismanagement, the government continues to break their legal obligations. They stonewall the province's independent officers.

Speaker, there's a pattern here. Now they have released unaudited financial statements—no verification from the Auditor General. People in Ontario want to know what this government is hiding and how it affects them. I ask the Premier, if the Auditor General refuses to verify their numbers, how can we ever trust anything they tell us?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): President of Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: What happened was that we had advice from our public servants, whom we certainly hold in high regard, that the books should be treated one way; we had advice from the Auditor General that the books should be treated another way. The way cabinet resolved this was to pass a regulation that the Auditor General's treatment would be used in 2015.

I would point out that, using the treatment the Auditor General asked us to use, in fact what we have is a \$5-billion deficit, which is \$3.5 billion lower than what we originally projected in the budget.

We do not have some sort of panic, as the person over there seems to think. What we have is the desire to get this information to the public so the public can figure out what is going on.

But I want to assure you, we used the auditor's numbers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. The Premier promised to be better, that she would ensure vulnerable children are a priority, but that has simply not been the case. Since September 18, CUPE workers in Local 4914, representing child protection, administrative and support staff at Peel CAS, have been on strike. Replacement workers are being paid outrageous amounts. No wonder there is distrust in the system.

Will the Premier step up and ensure that Peel CAS workers can get back to doing the important work they do for vulnerable children?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Labour is going to want to comment in the supplementary, but let me just say that I believe negotiations have to be between the parties who are involved, that the best deals are found at the table. I hope both sides will come together and find a way through the negotiation. That's the way the collective bargaining process works best.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: The buck stops with the Premier. Children's aid workers should be protecting children instead of being forced to walk picket lines. Children need stability. The children's aid system definitely needs stability.

1110

Vulnerable children should be the priority of this government. Making sure that people who work with them are respected is a key part of that. When will the government start making this about children in care and making sure that the people who provide the services are respected?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: As a former president of a children's aid society in this province, I well understand what the speaker is talking about when she asks about these types of issues. But we should be proud of the labour relations record we have in the province of Ontario. Collective agreements are reached in well over 90% of the disputes that take place. Collective agreements are reached without a resort to strike action. When we reach an impasse, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: When we reach an impasse like we have in this regard, we have some of the best arbitrators. We've got some of the best mediators, the best conciliators in the country that make themselves available to ensure that the parties are able to come to an agreement at the table. The best agreements are reached at the bargaining table. I would urge the parties to get back to the table and strike a deal.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Develop-

ment. This spring, our government made the exciting announcement that we are going to be making OSAP more generous for all students, and actually making tuition free for low-income students.

Could the minister please give this House an update on what this government is doing to make free tuition a reality?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question from the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

When qualified students are prevented from attending post-secondary education because of cost, we all lose. We are all better off when all of us get the education that they can.

That's why we're working hard to implement the most ambitious reform of student assistance in North America. I'm very proud that we are making tuition free for students with family incomes under \$50,000. We're also supporting families—it's progressive—with up to \$160,000 family income. Those students will still receive aid: improved, up-front grants and 150,000 students in Ontario will be getting grants that are higher than their tuition—getting free tuition.

What we're saying to students is, "You do the work, you get the marks, you get accepted. We'll make sure that money does not stand in the way of higher education."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you to the minister for her answer. Generous financial assistance is so important to ensuring that under-represented students are able to reach their full potential. However, we know that some low-income students never even apply for post-secondary education, let alone OSAP, because they assume the cost is too high.

The sticker price of going to school can present a very real hurdle for low-income students who may have a hard time understanding what financial assistance they might be eligible for.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what our government is doing to tell students about these changes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore is absolutely right. Yes, financial barriers can keep students from pursuing higher education, but the perception of high costs and the fear of taking on debt can be a roadblock in and of itself.

That's why we're working hard to spread the word about OSAP reform. We're going to college and university fairs. We're talking to guidance counsellors. We're going around the province to make sure that young people understand what doors our new OSAP can open for them.

Recently, I had the opportunity to tour the Ontario Universities' Fair at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre; 130,000 people attended that weekend. I visited the OSAP booth. I spoke to students. I spoke to parents. Staff manning that booth said it was the busiest they've ever been. People are excited about this. I'm also asking MPPs from all sides of the House to make sure students

in their ridings know that the doors of opportunity are open in Ontario.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. After five years, four ministers, and many FOIs and conversations with the Ombudsman, I finally received some information regarding the special purpose account.

As you know, Speaker, the money collected from hunters and anglers' licences, royalties and fines is to be used solely to improve hunting and fishing in Ontario. However, I was shocked to see that the money collected from hunters and anglers was going to purchase houses and psychologists. Would the minister be able to explain to hunters and anglers of this province how buying homes and paying for psychologists improves angling and hunting in Ontario?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I thank the member opposite for the question today.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the conservation officers who provide enforcement for our hunters and anglers and programs throughout Ontario. Thank you very much.

The member is talking about the special purpose account for our fish and wildlife programs. It costs about \$100 million annually to pay for the fish and wildlife programs and services across Ontario. In 2015, the SPA, the special purpose account, gained \$70 million. That goes to provide fish and wildlife management activities across Ontario. Some of those pieces talk about monitoring fish and wildlife populations, fish culture and stocking, fish and wildlife research management and planning, conservation officers and enforcement, draws and licensing activities, and hunter education to support that across—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: The lack of transparency and details continues with this new minister. Each minister I've dealt with—four of them over the past five years—has tried to hide the truth about the expenditures in the special purpose account.

This summer the Aylmer district stakeholders received a response from the MNRF in regard to finding out details of the special purpose expenses in our area. The response they received from the ministry was that they do not track expenditures for the fish and wildlife special purpose account. However, the Financial Administration Act requires that receipts and disbursements be recorded for special purpose accounts. We know they have the information for hunters and anglers.

Will the minister now release the details outlining how monies from the special purpose account were spent, and an explanation of how these monies have improved hunting and angling in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to ask him to withdraw, but the member was dangerously close to making an accusation that I cannot accept. So I

would warn anyone after this point not to go down that road, please.

Supplementary.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Again, I thank the member opposite for the supplementary question.

Staff that is funded from the fish and wildlife special purpose account include but is not limited to biologists, scientists, conservation officers, fish culture staff, field staff and administration staff. Expenditures related to staff salaries and benefits are paid through the fish and wildlife SPA for those staff performing fish and wildlife management activities across Ontario. There are directives and guidelines in place that govern benefits and staff relocation entitlements when required. We have a process within the ministry to review, each year, program costs within the ministry and the fish and wildlife SPA.

It costs about, again, \$100 million to pay for the fish and wildlife. But yet, that member, when asked to pay for an increase in budget, voted against that budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

New question.

TABLING OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. This government has refused to give information to the Financial Accountability Officer. They have attacked and they have undermined the Auditor General for this province repeatedly over the years. And now they have tabled the public accounts without the Auditor General's opinion for the first time ever. There is a pattern here, Speaker. This government is making the kind of history that leaves people deeply disappointed.

Will the Premier admit that this was a mistake and work with the auditor to retable audited public accounts for the province of Ontario?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would be absolutely delighted to table the public accounts, but I cannot do that until we have an audit opinion from the auditor. That is why yesterday we released the consolidated financial statements in our annual report, which is the same financial information. It is because we are awaiting an opinion from the auditor.

I would point out that we in fact passed the deadline for the tabling of the public accounts on the 27th, and I am not able to table the public accounts until we have an opinion from the auditor. When we get the opinion from the auditor, I will indeed table the public accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, they have an opinion. They just don't like that opinion.

This Premier promised to have the most transparent and open government in Canada, but that's not what people are seeing. The government is trying to avoid accountability very clearly. By tabling financials without

an audit, the Liberal government is releasing numbers that suit them, not the people of this province. We believe that the government should be about serving the people, not the interests of the Liberal Party.

Will the Premier commit to retabing the public accounts, with the agreement of Ontario's non-partisan Auditor General?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Just let me restate: I do not have a written opinion from the Auditor General. Once we have a written opinion from the Auditor General, I will be very happy to retable the accounts and they will say what the consolidated financial statements said, which we released yesterday, which is that the province has beaten its deficit target for the seventh year in a row. We had projected an \$8.5-billion deficit. In fact, we achieved a \$5-billion deficit, and that is in fact the number that the Auditor General requested that we use: \$5 billion. So by the auditor's accounting, we achieved a \$5-billion deficit, which is \$3.5 billion better than what we had projected in last year's budget.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the minister responsible for accessibility. One in seven people in Ontario has a disability, and this ratio is expected to increase to one in five over the next 20 years as our population ages.

I speak regularly with constituents in my riding of Davenport about accessibility in Ontario. They come in all the time and tell me that while Ontario has made great progress, there is still a lot that we can do to remove barriers and increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

Through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Ontario's action plan, the government has made a commitment to make Ontario accessible by 2025.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister share with the House some of the great work this government has done to move forward to make Ontario accessible by 2025?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Davenport for this great question.

As we know, October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and I will make a fuller statement in the House this afternoon on that.

I am happy to take this opportunity, as Ontario's first minister responsible for accessibility, to share with the House what makes Ontario a leader in accessibility. Through our AODA and our action plan, we are building on our strengths and sharpening our focus to engage businesses and promote cultural shifts. We've launched a marketing campaign focused on raising awareness of the employment standard for employers, and later this year we'll be releasing our provincial employment strategy for people with disabilities.

As well, we completed the first-ever review of the customer service standard and initiated the review of the transportation standard, which is currently under way. I'm happy to share more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister for sharing this information with the House. It is great to hear that this government sees the value and importance of making Ontario accessible for all.

I hear from my constituents all the time, both business owners and customers, about opportunities they have missed because of the barriers people with disabilities face. One of my constituents, Sharon, uses an electric scooter and visits my office regularly. She recently told me that when a business is accessible, not only do customers with disabilities serve to gain, but the business benefits as well.

While we know that organizations who make their services accessible gain a competitive advantage, unfortunately many organizations are unaware of this great opportunity. Can the minister explain how the government is engaging with businesses and business owners to understand the value and importance of becoming accessible?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member again for the question.

We know that for business being accessible is not just the right thing to do, but it's the smart thing to do. Reports have shown that the global market represents 1.3 billion people with disabilities and their 2.3 billion family members, friends, caregivers and colleagues. That amounts to \$8 trillion of disposable income globally that some businesses are unfortunately missing out on because of the lack of accessibility.

Greater accessibility in Ontario of course means greater opportunity for all. We're raising awareness through campaigns, engaging in public education, providing support for businesses and, of course, regularly conducting compliance inspection audits. We're working to ensure not only compliance with the law, but to help businesses see the value of being compliant as well. We recognize the importance of making our province fully accessible.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. We've been listening to the Minister of Energy lauding your hydro rebate plan for rural Ontario, where farmers have been especially hit hard by increasing electricity bills. Farms run on energy, and energy rates are one of the most expensive input costs for our farmers. Yet the minister is telling farmers that off-peak is the ideal time to use electricity: "Just farm during off-peak hours, and you'll save money, lots of money, a third of your bill." My question for the Premier is: Can she explain just how her time-of-use prices would be of any use to a farmer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to respond to the member's question, because it's yet another example of the chameleon-like tendencies of the new PC Party. One minute they're telling us that we should be trying to find ways to lower energy rates—we come in with a rebate

program that provides 8% across the board for small business users, farmers and others, and in rural parts of the province much more than that, and all we get from the member opposite is critique and criticism.

Mr. Speaker, we've responded to some of the concerns of our farmers. I know our Minister of Agriculture listens very closely to the concerns our farmers raise. We've put in place a program that will provide significant discounts on energy costs for our farmers and for residents right across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to go back to the Premier again. I think the Premier is coming to realize that her Liberal protection plan for Ontario farmers is moot. Cheaper rates would be a serious game-changer for farmers. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has told you that affordable energy could free up more than \$1 billion a year of new disposable income for rural Ontarians to invest in and build our rural economy. But maybe the Premier and her minister know better. So I ask her, how does she imagine getting Ontario's 360,000 dairy cows to give milk during off-peak hours?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm going to refer to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the supplementary this morning. In fact, it's interesting enough—I always read the commentary from the—

Mr. John Yakabuski: New program: Conversations with cows.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now I'll stand. The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I read the very articulate—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, second time.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —commentary from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We have the president in our gallery today. It's interesting when our colleague the Minister of Energy announced the program, there was a very positive commentary from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. In fact, by reducing the threshold level of the ICI, there will be more farm businesses in the province of Ontario that could take advantage of that program.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: Farmers are the foundation of our huge agricultural sector. Some 750,000 jobs depend on farmers. The risk management program was designed by farmers to ensure them against the boom-and-bust cycles in agriculture. The Liberal government capped the program—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To whom, please? I didn't hear who.

Mr. John Vanthof: The Liberal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, who are you asking?

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I said, to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry; I didn't hear.

Mr. John Vanthof: Sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

1130

Mr. John Vanthof: The Liberal government capped the program in the boom, but since 2012, farm gate prices for corn, wheat, beef and pork have plummeted by half.

Premier, will you lift the cap on the Risk Management Program to help protect farmers from the oncoming bust?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do appreciate the question from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who's been an agriculture leader in northeastern Ontario.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, it was a predecessor of mine, Carol Mitchell, who canvassed broadly to all commodity groups that are not covered by supply management in the province of Ontario. It was this government that brought in a Risk Management Program—the only province in Canada that has such a program.

We did so to help our farmers alleviate the challenges that they have—prices that are determined by the Chicago exchange—to level the playing field, to give them support. The \$100-million program is the place to do it, and my recollection is, Mr. Speaker, that we got no support from the opposition benches when that was in our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: The fact of the matter is, that program was designed by farmers and the government to be bankable and predictable, but then the government capped it, so it's no longer bankable and predictable.

The fact of the matter is, thousands of jobs rely on the stability of the farm community—because as farmers get economically squeezed, processors can't rely on their products because they might not be there. The government expects farmers to be stewards of the land with all their environmental rules, yet they don't come through with the programs that actually help farmers survive.

Once again, will this government remove the cap to maintain stability in the agriculture sector so we can retain the hundreds of thousands of jobs that that sector creates?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary. The fact of the matter is, we brought this program in when Carol Mitchell, a predecessor of mine, was here. The reason we did so is because farmers in Ontario who are not covered by supply management wanted stability in their industry. We wanted to get away from ad hoc programs.

This government of course had extensive consultation with the non-supply-management group. We brought in a

Risk Management Program for Ontario farmers that's bankable and predictable to make sure we can address those concerns like those we had this past summer, when parts of Ontario had unprecedented drought. I was in the field meeting with those farmers to make sure that they knew that our Risk Management Program was in place to help them.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. It's about the families in crisis and many more on the brink. They don't have the services they need to care for their adult children with developmental disabilities. Some families have no funding at all. Many are left sitting on wait-lists.

The Ombudsman's report concluded that the government response to their plight was "unreasonable and wrong." The minister knows how important this is, yet there was no mention of services for individuals with developmental disabilities in the throne speech. Why not, Speaker? And when will the government's response improve to something better than what the Ombudsman defines as "unreasonable and wrong"?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for the question, because it gives me the opportunity to say how much I respect the individuals with developmental disabilities in this province, their families, their caregivers and the challenges that they in fact face.

Certainly, the comments made by the Ombudsman I found to be entirely unacceptable. This is why we're working so hard to ensure that no individual is left in unacceptable circumstances. This is why on this side of the House we're working so very hard—many ministries are involved—to ensure that we have seamless service for these individuals. My colleagues the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the Minister of Education and I are particularly engaged in this file.

This, of course, is why we have shown our commitment to those with developmental disabilities. We are now spending some \$2.11 billion per year on this particular sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm sure the minister is sincere, but the government continues pushing families to the brink of crisis before they take notice.

The Hinz family, whom I represent, is one example. We appreciate the minister's interest, but this family has endured months of stress and uncertainty.

The Forte family also needs help. Lucas Forte needs Passport funding, but he's been on the wait-list for over a year. When Lucas turned 18, his funding stopped, even though he is the same person, with the same needs, he was the day before. Now he has to use his ODSP cheque for all of his needs.

What will the minister do for Lucas and his family, and why does this government still say "happy 18th

birthday" by cutting off services to those with exceptional needs?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, I cannot comment on individual cases in this House, but having said that, I want to assure every member that if they become aware of urgent situations, I and my ministry officials are anxious to look into the situation and look at any possible avenue of support.

I want to reiterate that our government did in fact introduce a budget that included \$810 million for the sector over three years, a budget that was voted against, in fact, by the opposition members. These funds have been put to exceptionally good use. We're now supporting some 42,000 individuals with developmental disabilities—direct funding for Passport now to more than 19,000 individuals—and we're currently supporting some 18,000 individuals for residential supports.

HYDRO REBATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My question is to the Premier. According to Statistics Canada, there are about 1.8 million people who live in rural Ontario. The Premier has told rural Ontarians that they will see an additional 12% in average savings off their hydro bills from an enhanced rural rate relief program, but as it turns out, only 330,000 rural customers will see the extra savings, including non-residential customers.

When will the government tell the people in Kenora—Rainy River how many of them will be getting 20% off their hydro bills and how many won't?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The changes we made are going to provide \$110 million of support and relief to rural and remote customers. That information was put forward when the minister made the announcement, so it was very clear to those residents as to where it applies and where it doesn't.

I know the minister has worked very closely with communities to identify where this applies and where it doesn't, but at the end of the day, every resident in Ontario gets an 8% discount off their bill. That's where it starts: 8% off their bill. It's a significant rebate. We heard very much from residents and we've responded.

We know there are challenges in rural Ontario as well, and we've responded to that because, depending on where they're at, whether they're in remote communities or not, they'll be getting up to 20% off their bill, which is good news for rural residents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: New regulations will force local utilities to start adding special government messaging about rural rate relief on their hydro bills, but you can bet that those bills won't mention that most northern and rural Ontarians are not getting the full 12% savings in the rural rate relief—and they need relief.

One woman in my riding recently wrote to me about the out-of-control hydro rates. She said, "My husband is

on disability. My goal now is to work until 70 and then drop dead.” She simply can’t afford to pay her hydro bill. Too many others in Kenora–Rainy River are literally being driven out of the province because of the high hydro rates.

When will the Premier tell us how many people in Kenora–Rainy River will actually get the full 12% in rural rate relief and how many people will just get another high bill with government spin?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said before, the new regulation includes an additional \$110 million of support for rural and remote residents. It’s very important that we do that, and it does depend on whether they’re in an urban area or a rural area, and those rules have been outlined. They’ll have to work through that to determine where in fact those residents live. But we’ve been very clear about it. Residents right across this province get about an 8% discount. We’ve heard; we’ve responded. We’re ensuring that those residents get a break on their energy bills. I think that’s what the people of this province expect, and I think they’ll be very pleased to get that. It would be nice if the NDP were positive about it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Often, when we think of occupational injuries, we think of those that can be seen by looking at a person: a cut or a broken bone. Over the course of the last few years, we have heard more about all sorts of injuries that can occur in workplaces that we cannot spot by simply looking at someone. Mental health is an example of this.

Another example is pains and strains or MSDs—musculoskeletal disorders—exactly the type of work being researched by Dr. Rainbow and his team at the state-of-the-art high-speed skeletal imaging laboratory at Queen’s University. These injuries can be debilitating and can impact Ontarians on working to their full potential or even at all.

Can the minister please share with the House what the Ministry of Labour is doing to prevent MSDs in Ontario workplaces?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member from Kingston and the Islands for her tremendous advocacy when it comes to occupational health and safety.

She’s correct: Not all illnesses, not all injuries, that take place in the workplace are actually ones that we can see. Every day, workers in this province use their muscles, their tendons, their ligaments, their joints; they lift, they carry, they sit, they stand; they move in a variety of ways in order to do the work in the job they have. Sometimes that can put a little bit too much demand on your body and can cause pain and discomfort, but it can lead to more serious injuries and it can lead to something called MSD.

October is the month when we recognize ergonomics. At the Ministry of Labour, our health and safety partners will be raising awareness of MSDs throughout the province of Ontario. I want to take this opportunity to

encourage employers and workers to take part in these planned activities. It’s going to prevent injury.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry concerning expenditures in the special purpose account. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters / Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui a trait à des questions concernant les élections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members, please take your seats.

On September 21, 2016, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters. Mr. Duguid has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Duguid’s motion, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Oraziotti, David
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Brown, Patrick	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Campbell, Sarah	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Norm	Yakubuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	
	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 51; the nays are 40.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Hillier, Randy	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoggarth, Ann	Nicholls, Rick
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Oraziotti, David
Brown, Patrick	Hoskins, Eric	Pettapiece, Randy
Campbell, Sarah	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Coe, Lorne	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	MacLeod, Lisa	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Walker, Bill
DiNovo, Cheri	Mauro, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Dong, Han	McDonnell, Jim	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fedeli, Victor	McMahon, Eleanor	Yakubuski, John
Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Yurek, Jeff
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNaughton, Monte	Zimmer, David
Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.	
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 91; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So be it.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a couple of introductions. The first is David Bellmore, who is my executive assistant in Environment and Climate Change. He's not here but I know he's watching, and today is a very, very special birthday for him. Happy 40th, David Bellmore.

Speaker, more importantly, it gives me great pleasure to recognize Rory O'Shea; his wife, Marlene Schmidt; and children Teaghan O'Shea and Dillon O'Shea, who are here to witness my member's statement today in honour of his mother, Peggy Delaney. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome a former student of mine from St. Michael's College School. I remember him when he was in grade 9, can you believe it? And look at him now. Rory O'Shea, welcome.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature Carion Fenn, president and founder of the Carion Fenn Foundation. I had the honour of speaking with this young lady at a rare-disease expo in Ajax recently. We will address the good works that she does in a very short time.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**FLU IMMUNIZATION**

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to inform the House today that October is Influenza Immunization Awareness Month. Influenza—referred to as the flu—is a viral infection of the nose, throat and lungs. It can be very easily spread from person to person through the touching of common objects, coughing, sneezing or talking to another person.

Although the flu can affect everyone, those suffering from an acute disease, people over 65, young children under five, pregnant women and indigenous peoples are most at risk.

Ontarians may be suffering from the flu if they experience a high fever of 39 degrees Celsius or higher, a severe cough, severe muscle aches, a severe headache,

chills, severe fatigue, sore throat or a runny or stuffy nose.

It may take between one and four days for flu symptoms to appear after exposure to the virus and between seven and 10 days for most Ontarians to recover.

There are several tips to keep in mind this winter to prevent your chances of coming in contact with the flu. These tips include frequent hand-washing, sneezing into your arm instead of your hand, avoiding touching your nose, mouth, eyes and ears, and regularly disinfecting common objects such as computers, telephones and door handles.

But the best prevention is to get your flu shot. The vaccine may protect you from getting the virus or minimize the symptoms of the virus. It may also help protect others by decreasing the spread of the virus.

This winter, I encourage all Ontarians to visit their health care professional to receive their flu shot, in particular pharmacists, who are the most accessible health care providers, with their increased scope of practice. Last year, 2,500 pharmacies participated and administered over 860,000 flu shots.

Mr. Speaker, winter is coming. I can't stress enough the importance of getting your flu shot. I encourage all Ontarians to get their flu shot.

LONDON FREE PRESS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, today I rise to speak about the closure of the printing press of the London Free Press and the 135 jobs that have been lost in my hometown of London, Ontario.

On June 1, it was announced that Postmedia Network will outsource the printing of the Free Press to Metroland Media Group's printing facility in Hamilton.

For over 150 years, the London Free Press has been a beacon in our community. It is our local paper, the heartbeat of our city. Our rich experiences as Londoners have been written in those pages, and the ink that flows onto the newsprint through those printing presses has been like our lifeblood.

Our city takes great pride in the London Free Press, and part of our sense of ownership comes from it being printed in London. This closure represents another hit to the city of London and our families. While many tout the crisis of media consolidation as inevitable, we feel the loss to our community. Each of those 135 jobs represents a friend, a neighbour and a fellow Londoner, and we feel their loss deeply.

I ask them to take heart, knowing their hard work and dedication will never be forgotten. Their service is forever enshrined in our city's shared and lived experience. Today, we are losing more than good jobs and economic security; we are also losing a part of our city's heritage.

PEGGY DELANEY

Mr. Arthur Potts: I rise today to remember and salute Peggy Delaney, a remarkable Beaches–East York

resident. Recently, with Mary-Margaret McMahan, the local councillor, I was able to take part in the naming of a laneway ceremony in Peggy's honour, and to learn more about her from those who loved her and knew her best.

Peggy was originally from Ireland and moved to Toronto in 1954. She was involved in theatre, fashion and the arts, and possessed a wonderful voice that was the highlight of many events and occasions. She was also a tireless campaigner, fundraiser and participant for numerous causes, including assisting with the Special Olympics and sponsoring children through World Vision.

Her class, compassion, character and generosity made her very special. She was always ready to help those who were less fortunate and would often travel great distances to be with people who were sick. She also possessed a tremendous confidence and a great sense of humour, with great lines such as, "I can do any job as well as any two men."

She was fiercely proud of her Irish heritage and equally proud of her Canadian home, raising four children here and acting as a mentor to countless others. Although she was recognized for many contributions, three stood out as her favourites. In 1997, she was christened Grand Marshal of the Toronto St. Patrick's Day parade, leading the procession on horseback at the age of 72; in 1988, she was honoured by her peers as Irish Person of the Year; and, with Ireland's ambassador to Canada, she raised the Irish flag at Toronto city hall.

By all accounts, she was an ordinary citizen who left an extraordinary legacy, now made more permanent by the naming of a laneway, Peggy Delaney Way, in Beaches–East York because, Speaker, she had her own special way.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: October is Autism Awareness Month. Earlier this year when the government announced that children over the age of five would no longer be able to receive intensive behavioural intervention, we heard stories from families who expressed the positive impact IBI therapy had on their children's ability to succeed in school and in our communities. Even after the government's own expert panel warned that removing children over five would have a detrimental impact on their lives, the government continued sticking to their talking points. This left hundreds of families in a state of fear and uncertainty as to whether their child would lose out on accessing this life-changing therapy.

After months of opposition from parents, experts, municipalities, both opposition parties and organizations from across Ontario, the government finally reversed their decision. But there's still much work to do. This week, we heard about the Yes I Can Nursery School, which does tremendous work with children with autism, and they're losing their funding from this government. This is unacceptable. We must ensure supports are there for when they are in school and for when they transition into adulthood, because autism doesn't end at five.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm proud to rise today as the MPP for Windsor West to highlight an important event that took place in Toronto this past weekend that I had the honour of attending.

On Sunday, October 2, hundreds of firefighters, families and friends gathered to celebrate the lives of and remember the sacrifices of fallen firefighters. Seventy-nine names of fallen firefighters were added to the wall of the firefighter memorial. Of those 79 names, three were Windsor firefighters. Along with firefighters from across Ontario, members of Windsor's fire service were in attendance to pay their respects to their three fallen brothers.

Speaker, it was a solemn occasion and those of us in attendance could not help but leave the ceremony feeling touched by the incredible camaraderie and sense of family exhibited by the firefighters in attendance. Regardless of what part of the province they travelled from, no matter what community they serve, our firefighters have the connection to one another that we civilians may never experience. The personal sacrifices our firefighters make on a daily basis and those of their family and friends should never be overlooked or dismissed. The selfless service they dedicate themselves to not only makes an immeasurable impact on our lives but leaves a lifelong imprint on their lives as well.

Today I would like to thank firefighters across Ontario for the work that they do, thank Windsor firefighters for their service to my community and thank Sonny Gherasim, Darrell Ellwood, Arthur Laslett and their families for the sacrifice they have made to help so many others.

1510

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bob Delaney: Korea is an ancient land with a gentle and unique culture in northeast Asia, nestled among Japan, Russia and Mongolia. Korean civilization dates back nearly two millennia before the Christian era.

Korea today is a vibrant, dynamic, fiercely democratic and modern nation. After China and Japan, South Korea is Canada's third-largest trading partner in Asia. Our Ontario cities are home to a thriving, well-educated Korean community, proud of its origins and culture and working to build a strong Canada, province of Ontario and the communities in which they live as our neighbours.

This week's Korea national flag-raising ceremony was an opportunity to celebrate Korea's contribution to Canada and to work harder on a mutually beneficial trading relationship between the two countries. We heard encouraging words from Korea's consul general, Mr. Jeong-Sik Kang, and the president of the Korea cultural and community association, Mr. Ki Seok Lee.

Just as Canada is, for Korean firms, a superb gateway to the North American market, so too Korea is one of the nations that, in Asia, makes a good step-off point for

firms that deal with China. We in Ontario look forward to solid trade and cultural progress and further exchange following the Premier's delegation in South Korea later this year. Thank you very much, Speaker. Kamsahamnida.

DON GREEN

Mr. Steve Clark: With a heavy heart, I rise to celebrate the life of Don Green. If the measure of one's life is the impact you made on others, then Don Green was a giant. Our world is a better place today because Don was a part of it.

Born in Toronto in 1929, Don married the love of his life, Shirley, after graduating from RMC. He went to work with his father-in-law and helped build United Maple Products into one of Canada's largest maple syrup producers.

What he accomplished in business was remarkable. Indeed, many entrepreneurs in my riding will tell you that they owe their success to Don's mentorship.

But success in business did not define Don. Together with Shirley, he built a legacy of philanthropy that stretched around the world and would change lives at home and abroad for generations. From the Brockville YMCA to Brockville General Hospital, countless organizations and people of all ages were benefactors of their generosity. When a fundraising drive suddenly made its goal thanks to an anonymous donor, we all knew that Don and Shirley were likely responsible. Around the globe, the Greens were champions of Canadian Aid for Chernobyl and gave \$2 million to build a village for orphans in Namibia. Don set an example we can all follow: to use our good fortune to provide hope and opportunity to those less fortunate.

Speaker, I join all residents of Leeds-Grenville in extending my heartfelt condolences to Shirley, Don's beloved wife of 60 years, and their children, Donald Jr., Ellen and Debbie.

NEW LISKEARD FALL FAIR

Mr. John Vanthof: Along with harvest season in Ontario comes fall fair season. I'm sure many of us have fall fairs in our ridings. I'd like to name a few of mine. I've got Warren, Cochrane, Charlton, Englehart, Matheson, Porquis and the one I'd like to focus on today: the New Liskeard Fall Fair. It was held September 15, 16 and 17. All fairs are wonderful, but some of the unique aspects of this fair: the children's parade on Friday where all the schools bus the children to a central point and you see 1,000 kids walking down Whitewood Avenue to go to the parade. That's truly heartwarming.

On Saturday, they have the regular parade. I've never actually counted the people; I'm too busy handing out candies. We just hand out candies to the kids, and we hand out 1,000 every year. So that is a big parade.

One of the highlights of the New Liskeard Fall Fair is that if you buy an entrance ticket, you get tickets for the car draw. Every night, there are 10 names drawn out of the drum. If you're in attendance and your name is

picked on the last night—it's 30 people, and the last person picked wins a car. The local dealers, every year, take turns donating the car. It's a packed, packed event.

There's everything you could think of at the fair. There's the midway; there are the horse draws; there are the cattle shows. All the volunteers that work at that fair and all the other ones: I'd like to thank them for all the work they do to keep our rural heritage alive.

CARION FENN FOUNDATION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I had the pleasure to attend the first annual rare-disease expo in Ajax on Saturday, September 24, organized by Carion Fenn, president and founder of the Carion Fenn Foundation. She is here with two of her associates, Marcia Bowen and Maria Ciotta. They're in the east gallery. If you would like to stand, ladies, so we can acknowledge you.

I would like to carry on with Carion Fenn. She's the architect behind the rare-disease support meetings in partnership with our Ajax library and, of course, the rare-disease expo. Carion is an award-winning advocate, receiving the Spinal Cord Injury Ontario and University Health Networks Patty Dawson Award, the Town of Ajax Civic Award and the Accessibility Community Award, to name a few.

Her foundation, the Carion Fenn Foundation, educates, supports and helps to find solutions for those affected by rare diseases. There are over 7,000 known rare diseases, and more than 50% of those impact our children. The Carion Fenn Foundation is a registered not-for-profit organization.

I'm proud that our Minister of Health has been working with partners from across the country, leading a working group to develop a pan-Canadian rare-disease strategy. Earlier this year, the minister announced steps to create a clinic focused on diagnosing and treating adults and children with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome.

The key to helping those with rare diseases is to improve early detection and prevention, provide timely and accurate diagnosis and care, and improve community supports for patients and their families.

I'm proud that Carion is helping to provide these community supports in Ajax for patients and families with all these rare diseases. It is my hope that we will continue to work together to improve the lives of those suffering with rare diseases. I thank you on behalf of myself and my colleague Granville Anderson.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for joining us.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended

appointments dated October 4, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RIGHT TO CARE ACT (CHILDREN 16 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER), 2016 LOI DE 2016 SUR LE DROIT AUX SOINS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ENFANTS DE 16 ANS ET PLUS

Mr. McDonnell moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 32, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older / Projet de loi 32, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne les enfants de 16 ans et plus.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: The bill amends the Child and Family Services Act. Section 1 of the act is amended to include a new purpose of the act, which is to recognize that the services provided under the act should be provided in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At present, section 29 of the act prohibits a temporary care agreement from being made in respect of a child who is 16 years of age or older. Section 29 is amended to allow temporary care agreements to be made in respect of children who are 16 years of age or older.

TIME TO CARE ACT (LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AMENDMENT, MINIMUM STANDARD OF DAILY CARE), 2016 LOI DE 2016 SUR LE TEMPS ALLOUÉ AUX SOINS (MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE ET PRÉVOYANT UNE NORME MINIMALE EN MATIÈRE DE SOINS QUOTIDIENS)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to establish a minimum standard of daily care / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les foyers de soins de longue durée afin d'établir une norme minimale en matière de soins quotidiens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The bill amends the Long-Term Care Home Act of 2007 so that the long-term-care home will have to provide its residents with at least four hours a day of nursing and personal support services, averaged across the residents. The minimum hours may be increased by regulation.

The short title of the bill is the Time to Care Act.

1520

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM
AMENDMENT ACT (RELATIONSHIP
WITH GRANDPARENTS), 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI
PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT
DE L'ENFANCE (RELATION
AVEC LES GRANDS-PARENTS)

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act with respect to the relationship between a child and the child's grandparents / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne la relation entre un enfant et ses grands-parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Michael Mantha: The bill amends the Children's Law Reform Act.

Subsection 20(2.1) is added to the act. That subsection prohibits a person entitled to custody of a child from creating or maintaining unreasonable barriers to the formation and continuation of a personal relationship between the child and the child's grandparents.

Subsection 24(2) of the act is amended. That subsection sets out the needs and circumstances of a child that the court must consider in determining the best interests of the child. The bill adds to that list the emotional ties between the child and the child's grandparents and the willingness of each person applying for custody of the child to facilitate contact with the child's grandparents if such contact would be appropriate in the circumstances.

EMPOWERING HOME CARE
PATIENTS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 DONNANT PLUS
DE POUVOIR AUX PERSONNES
RECEVANT DES SOINS À DOMICILE

Mrs. Gretzky moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994 with respect to complaints and appeals / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la

Loi de 1994 sur les services de soins à domicile et les services communautaires en ce qui concerne les plaintes et les appels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Under section 39 of the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994, an approved agency is required to establish a process for reviewing complaints about specified matters. The bill shortens the time period, from 60 days to 30 days, during which an agency is required to respond to complaints respecting decisions about the particular community services a person is entitled to receive. The bill requires the agency's response to include information about the process for appealing the decision to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board.

The bill also provides that if the decision of the agency would have the effect of terminating or reducing the community services provided to a person, an appeal to the board stays the decision.

The short name of the bill is the Empowering Home Care Patients Act.

MOTIONS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business and membership in committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot items 12 and 15 be waived, and that on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mrs. Martins replaces Ms. Vernile, and that on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Ms. Vernile replaces Mrs. Martins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to recognize one as a single motion, so if I can get the minister to modify that.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 12 and 15 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot items 12 and 15 be waived. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding membership in committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mrs. Martins replaces Ms. Vernile, and that on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Ms. Vernile replaces Mrs. Martins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that, on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mrs. Martins replaces Ms. Vernile—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding sign-language interpreters.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I move that sign language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber today to interpret statements by the ministry and responses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to have an interpreter on the floor. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESNATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT
AWARENESS MONTHMOIS NATIONAL
DE LA SENSIBILISATION À L'EMPLOI
DES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker, and welcome to our interpreter.

I'm honoured to rise in the House today to recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Monsieur le Président, je suis honorée de me tenir devant l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour célébrer le Mois national de la sensibilisation à l'emploi des personnes handicapées.

I'd also like to recognize the rich and enduring history of indigenous people in Ontario. Toronto is a sacred

gathering place for many people of Turtle Island, and I'd like to pay particular respect to the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

Today, Ontario joins governments and communities across the country to advocate for the inclusion of people of all abilities in our workforces. The fact is, increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities and building accessible workplaces is a matter of fundamental importance to our society today and our economy for tomorrow. It will expand business. It will grow the economy. It will diversify workplaces, and it will strengthen our communities.

There are many compelling reasons to promote inclusive employment; 800,000 of them are undeniable. That's the number of Canadians with disabilities out of the workforce—talented people who are ready and willing and able to contribute to their communities and the economy. It's a social, cultural and economic imperative for the entire country, and it's one that the government of Ontario intends to address.

Il s'agit d'un impératif social, culturel et économique pour tout le Canada. C'en est un à l'égard duquel le gouvernement de l'Ontario compte bien s'engager.

It's why, 11 years ago, members of this House came together to support the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It's also why, this spring, Premier Wynne appointed me as the first minister responsible for accessibility. I'm honoured to serve in the role.

We have a bold vision for the future, one where our province is accessible to all people of all abilities by 2025. To get there, we'll encourage employers to hire more people with disabilities to expand their talent pool and strengthen their workforce. We will also continue to work with companies, communities and individuals to embed accessibility in our workplaces and neighbourhoods and to make inclusion part of our lives. With a goal to become accessible by 2025, Ontario has become a global leader.

1530

Across the province, communities, businesses and not-for-profits are implementing important accessibility standards. Our accessible employment standard is helping to shift the way employers approach recruitment and retention. It includes requirements to incorporate accessibility into hiring processes, workplace information and career development. As we move forward, we'll continue to highlight how simple and beneficial accessibility can be.

Inclusion should be a standard part of doing business in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. We want all Ontarians to embrace accessibility, not simply as a legal obligation but as an exciting business and community-building opportunity. That's why our government is developing a cross-cutting, multi-ministry employment strategy for people with disabilities. This new strategy will not only fulfill a major budget commitment; it will also address recommendations by the Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities and the Premier's highly skilled workforce panel.

By taking a whole-government approach and by listening to people with disabilities, it will help connect more people to the labour market while helping more employers to become accessible and meet their labour needs. The idea is to offer streamlined services and in-demand training to address the requirements of job-seekers and businesses.

We also understand that to achieve an accessible province by 2025, we need to change perceptions. That's why promoting a cultural shift is one of the three pillars in Ontario's Accessibility Action Plan. It will help to eliminate stigma, entrench inclusive values and lift expectations. We're very proud to partner with forward-thinking employers and organizations that can help spread the word.

The Ontario Disability Employment Network, a provincial accessibility champion, is hosting a number of employer events this month to promote the contributions people with disabilities make to workplaces.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is also reaching out to employers, organizing discussions that highlight how inclusive employment can boost a business's bottom line.

Then there's Dolphin Digital Technologies. The award-winning Ontario IT company has hosted an employment mentoring day for people with disabilities for the last six years. This year's mentorship day is expanding to six communities across the province. Dolphin knows that workers of all abilities would help companies reach a diverse global market, and we know our economy would benefit from a larger tax base, increased innovation and competitive new sectors.

This is how inclusion can grow our economy while strengthening our society. Mr. Speaker, accessibility will build Ontario up. It will help people of all abilities in their everyday life.

L'accessibilité permettra de faire progresser l'Ontario. Elle aidera les gens de toutes capacités au quotidien.

I invite everyone to join me in observing National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Let's work together to break down employment barriers this month and every day of the year. Thank you. Meegwetich.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I rise in the House today to speak about Bill 28, the All Families are Equal Act. It is a bill that, among other things, would propose changes to the law governing the legal status of a child's parents at birth, which has not been updated in nearly 40 years. We all recognize the importance of family in the development of a child, the importance of growing up with the love and guidance of parents, of having a strong and stable place to call home.

Over the past 40 years, the value our society has placed in family has remained rock solid. But our understanding of what it means to be a family—what it means to be a parent—has evolved. Today, we recognize that there are many ways to have a family. Families can

be all different shapes and sizes. There is really no right way to do it as long as at the core, the ability to love, nurture and care for a child is there.

Our idea of what constitutes a family has changed dramatically over the past few decades. But, unfortunately, our laws haven't always kept pace with the social evolution that has occurred. Our province's parentage law is one such example. Last updated in 1978, our parentage law was written with a view of what it means to be a parent that is far too narrow today—definitely by today's standards. The result is that not every family is treated the same when it comes to who is considered a legal parent.

In fact, there are extra burdens placed on certain parents who need to use reproductive technologies to have children, meaning that sometimes they have to spend time and money to be legally recognized as a child's parents. To give an example: If a lesbian couple uses a sperm donor whom they know to help them conceive a child, under the current law, the birth mother and the sperm donor would be the child's parents, even if the donor had no intention of raising the child. The birth mother's partner would potentially have to spend thousands of dollars on lawyers' fees and take time off work to attend court dates just to be legally recognized as something she already is: a parent.

We are fortunate to live in a time where reproductive technologies are available to help people start a family when they cannot on their own. Some couples must rely on donors to conceive, or find a surrogate to carry the child. Today, couple who use a surrogate to have a baby would not be legally recognized as the child's parents until they are able to obtain a court order declaring them so. That could be weeks after a child is born.

Our proposed legislation would allow the intended parents to be legally recognized as parents sooner. The couple who plan to raise the baby would not have to go through the court system, provided they have a written agreement with the surrogate before conception and the surrogate obtained independent legal advice before conception and she confirms her consent to give up her parental rights after the baby is born.

Advancements in reproductive technologies also make it possible for a person to have their reproductive material preserved, which may then be used to conceive a child after their death. For example, a woman who was stricken with a life-threatening disease could decide to have her eggs frozen so they could be used to conceive a child at a later date with her partner. Her genetic material could be used after death to conceive a child. Under our bill, the woman would still be recognized as the mother. This is important because her child may be entitled to inherit or seek support from her estate as long as there is a written agreement between the woman and her partner and the child was born within three years of her death.

In Ontario, we know that some families extend beyond two parents. Our courts have been approving these types of family structures for years, always with the best interests of the child at heart. Our bill would also allow

up to four people to be recognized as the parents of a child, regardless of the method of conception, without a court order. All parties to the arrangements would have to agree before conception to be parents of the child together and each parent would be required to certify the birth of the child on the birth registration.

The bottom line is that our bill allows people who have already agreed to raise a child together to be able to just that, legally, and that they can do it without having to go to court, provided there is an agreement before the baby is conceived.

The issue of legal parentage is very complex and touches on many different areas of the law, amending 41 separate acts. Over the past few months, our government has worked very hard to develop a proposal that would not only help ensure that all parents and all kids are treated equally but also provide children with certainty about who their parents are at the earliest possible time.

Over the summer, the ministry of the Attorney General met with various stakeholders including lawyers, families, fertility experts and members of the LGBTQ2+ community to get their input in the drafting of the bill. We worked closely with Jennifer and Kirsti Mathers McHenry, whose children Cy and Ruby were the inspiration for the private member's bill on this exact matter. We consulted with the author of that bill, the member from Parkdale–High Park. We also drew on the work done by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, the Manitoba Law Reform Commission and the experiences of British Columbia and Alberta, which have already introduced similar legislation in their jurisdiction. It was a tremendous effort, and I want to sincerely thank everyone for their time and dedication to this very important matter.

Ontarians expect that all people in this province are treated equally under the law, no matter their race, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. It's 2016, and it's about time our laws met that expectation when it comes to recognizing parents and recognizing what it means to be a parent. We have developed a bill that will help ensure that all kids are treated equally by recognizing the legal status of their parents no matter if their parents are LGBTQ2+ or straight, or if they're conceived with or without assistance.

The proposed All Families Are Equal Act, if passed, would end the legal uncertainty faced by parents who conceive their children using assisted reproduction. Instead of worrying about lawyers' fees and legal documents, those parents can get down to the really important stuff, like diaper changes and installing crib mobiles, just like any other parent and like any other family.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

1540

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm honoured to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader,

Patrick Brown, to recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This is an opportunity to celebrate the talents of people with disabilities: our two million fellow Ontarians and all those on the front lines of advocating for better accessibility laws and treatment. It's also a time for us to observe the government's progress on this file.

We believe individuals with disabilities—

Mr. Jim McDonnell: You have to slow down.

Mr. Bill Walker: Oh, sorry.

We believe individuals with disabilities strengthen our workforce, our communities and our province, so we must always uphold the basic belief of equal access, equal opportunity and equal respect for all Ontarians.

Gauging the progress of this government, we believe it could be doing more to uphold that belief through the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and in addressing the injustices that remain for Ontarians with disabilities. They make up 15% of our population but, regrettably, are unemployed at a rate that is almost twice that of people without disabilities.

This is why we were disheartened to hear that this government, the one that said it would be a force for good in people's lives, was all of a sudden pulling the plug on DREN, a disability employment hub that has served Durham region for 23 years and whose leadership was recognized by the province's special adviser on accessibility, former Lieutenant Governor David Onley.

Over the past year, they've cut millions in special education, leaving parents of students with special needs in a real lurch. Imagine the incredible talents and opportunities that are going to waste as a result of this government's cuts to these social programs and services.

So I'm a little weary having to hear the minister repeat what was said by her leader, Premier Kathleen Wynne, in her first throne speech 3.5 years ago: to stand up for the little guy, be a force for good and make employment for people with disabilities a priority. I'd much rather like to know what she didn't say today in question period. She admitted the fact that her government has a direct role in perpetuating some of those discriminatory practices when they cut services for children with special needs and shut down disability employment hubs like DREN, leaving hundreds of the disabled with limited access to skills training and with diminished job expectations.

You don't expand opportunities for Ontarians with disabilities by cutting funding and shutting down employment services. You know they won't get a fair crack at the job market until they get a fair crack at education in Ontario, and right now, a third of a million students face an education system full of accessibility barriers.

As I challenged in question period nine days ago, the question remains: How is it that this government could find \$70 million for the defunct ORPP pension plan, \$6 million for Pan Am executives and \$4 million for Hydro One's CEO but won't put a single dollar into a successful employment office for people with disabilities or to reduce accessibility barriers in our schools, colleges and universities? Clearly, the Wynne government has not only failed to do what it promised but has actually

undone some of the opportunities built over the last two decades.

I think Mr. David Onley put it so succinctly when he said that “the unemployment rate facing people with disabilities is not only a national crisis; it is a national shame.”

The bottom line is that the Wynne government has not done what it promised it would fix. It has no real results to show for it. It’s time to put money where your mouth is and help build an inclusive education system and an inclusive workforce that leverages people’s abilities.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I may slow down my speech so the interpreter may keep up.

There’s no doubt that the intentions behind Bill 28 involve a desire to relieve the strain that many people face in our often clogged and costly family courts. It’s refreshing to see that the Liberal government is taking ideas from other parties while proposing new policies. That is, indeed, a rarity. However, what may be overlooked are the unintended consequences that these proposed changes may have on that very system.

As of June this year, the Family Court system was dealing with over 12,000 pending cases. Of that number, adoptions affected by this bill are a very small minority of its workload. However, when compared to the vastly larger workload imposed on the courts by child custody, child access and child support cases, this bill forces us to evaluate the consequences it may impose. While this bill enables parentage to be assigned to three or more people, it opens the door for child custody, access and support cases to become substantially more complicated and stressful for parents and children.

Justice Harvey Brownstone provided a word of caution on reliance on family courts when he said, “People are expecting to go have their case, their life, determined by a judge who’s going to have the time to read the material and give the case the kind of attention that they feel they deserve. That’s not going to happen.”

I’ll have to shorten up.

I am looking forward to seeing a thorough and far-reaching examination and review of this bill in committee, ensuring that we do indeed limit and prevent injustices with this bill.

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It is an honour to rise and speak on the important issue of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Being able to find meaningful, gainful employment is as important to people with disabilities as it is for all Ontarians, yet despite this government’s commitment in its first throne speech, three and a half years ago, to make employment inclusive for people of all abilities a priority, it has failed to achieve measurable results.

The government’s special adviser on accessibility, former Lieutenant Governor David Onley, has said that the unemployment rate facing people with disabilities in Canada is not only a “national crisis,” but it is also a “national shame.” This government’s lack of action on this important issue is equally shameful. Raising awareness and making promises is not enough to solve this problem.

People with disabilities are looking to this government to take on a leadership role and to take meaningful steps to ensure that jobs are there for people with disabilities who are willing and able to work. This is an issue I have heard about time and time again from people with disabilities, who have pleaded with me in tears to help them find work. In many cases, they can’t afford not to work, with the abysmal disability rates that exist in this province.

The bottom line is that people with disabilities will not get treated fairly in the job market until they are treated fairly in Ontario’s education system. Presently, there are 334,000 students with special education needs in publicly funded schools, and even more students with disabilities seeking a post-secondary education. These students face an education system full of accessibility barriers.

It is time for the Ontario government to agree to create a long-overdue education accessibility standard under the AODA, to make Ontario’s education system accessible for students with disabilities, something New Democrats have joined people with disabilities in calling for for at least half a decade.

It is time for this government to act and ensure that people with disabilities are able to participate in meaningful employment opportunities.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Attorney General said it best: It has been too long. In fact, it has been 10 years since Justice Rivard found the Ontario birth registration scheme to be discriminatory. It was followed up in 2007 by the Court of Appeal, which reiterated that it’s discriminatory, and yet the government kept fighting some 21 LGBTQ families, until April 8, 2016, when they finally ruled that the government had to do something, had to bring in a bill by September 30. They did, and kudos for that; however, there was a bill already, Cy and Ruby’s Act, that in December 2015 passed second reading with all-party approval. That could have been passed too.

In regard to this bill—which we are delighted about, by the way, and we thank all the stakeholders who have been involved since the get-go on this—there are significant amendments that need to be made. A couple of them would be deal-breakers, and I can’t say this strongly enough. The Attorney General has given us reassurance that these amendments will be made at committee. If they are not, the government will find itself back in court with the same litigants who have already been ruled about. So I plead with the government: Please look at the amendments. They have just received them from the lawyers

involved. Please make the necessary changes, because this bill is about equality—not only the equality of parents, but the equality of their children.

In light of the concerns of my PC colleague, I have to say that not only will it not clog up the court system, it will alleviate the court system. These families already exist; whatever trials and tribulations they have already exist as well. What it will free up is all of those parents who have to go through the court system to adopt their very own children. So for the sake of our children, their parents and all of us here, I hope this is the last we see of this issue and that it's good news for all involved.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition regarding electricity costs.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office; and

“Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

“Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

“Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associ-

ated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills.”

I've signed this, I support this and I'm giving it to Om.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank Maja Mielonen from Manitoulin Island Cycling Advocates. Her petition reads:

“Paved Shoulders on Highway 540

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the MTO designated specific highways for upgrades and resurfacing and Highway 540 has been designated for resurfacing in 2016-18;

“Whereas Highway 540 is a major connecting link between communities from Little Current to Meldrum Bay;

“We, the undersigned, petition the MTO and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to include paved shoulders in order to make Highway 540 safe for all road users, and to promote cycling as a healthy, environmentally friendly activity which has become an important part of Manitoulin's tourist economy.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Brendan to bring it down to the Clerks' table.

ICE MACHINES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas ice machines are found everywhere throughout the health care system, including long-term-care facilities and hospitals; and

“Whereas numerous bacteria and viruses are known to contaminate ice cubes, including cholera, typhoid fever, salmonella, legionella, E. coli, shigella, hepatitis A and norovirus; and

“Whereas the lack of regulation increases the probability of consuming ice from ice machines with unhygienic levels of bacteria and/or viruses, putting public safety at risk; and

“Whereas individuals consuming ice from a contaminated ice machine in a hospital or long-term-care facility are at a greater risk due to potentially weakened immune systems; and

“Whereas the inherent risk and rate at which both bacteria and biofilm grow inside ice machines have caused other countries to mandate the cleaning of ice machines; and

“Whereas there are currently no mandates or guidelines on the frequency or thoroughness of cleaning for institutional ice machines in hospitals, long-term-care or other health care facilities;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario establish and enforce cleaning and hygiene standards for all institutional ice

machines in provincially funded and/or operated facilities.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with Tegan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000 visits and experiences in excess of 33,000 visits annually” in its emergency room; “and

“Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

“Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area.”

I agree with this petition and I’ll certainly sign it.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

“Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

“Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

“Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the” Legislative Assembly “of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so

doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients’ groups within one year.”

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give to page Tori to deliver to the table.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great many people in my riding and, in fact, people from all across the province.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I affix my signature, Mr. Speaker, as I agree with this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

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“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

Speaker, I approve. I’ll sign my name and give it to Brendan to bring up to the front.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a staff report has recommended the Upper Canada District School Board close numerous schools across eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas access to quality local education is essential for rural communities to thrive; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education removed community impact considerations from pupil accommodation review guidelines in 2015; and

“Whereas local communities treasure their public schools and have been active participants in their continued operation, maintenance and success; and

“Whereas the Ontario government should focus on delivering quality, local education services to all communities including rural Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) To reinstate considerations of value to the local community and value to the local economy in pupil accommodation review guidelines; and

“(2) To work with all school boards, including Upper Canada District School Board, to prevent the closure of rural public schools.”

I agree with this and will be passing it on to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Further petitions.

DISASTER RELIEF

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Katherine Donovan from Gogama for signing the petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas at 2 a.m. on March 7, 2015, a Canadian National train derailed in Gogama;

“Whereas this derailment caused numerous tank cars carrying crude oil to explode, catch fire and spill over one million litres of oil into the Makami River; and

“Whereas residents continue to plainly observe oil and find dead fish in the Makami River as well as Lake Minisinakwa, despite the fact that the Ministry of the Environment has declared the cleanup complete;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change “require CN to continue the cleanup of Gogama’s soil and waterways until the residents are assured of clean and safe water for themselves, the environment and the wildlife.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask Gideon to bring it to the Clerk.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to stop the sale of Hydro One.

“Whereas the decision to sell Hydro One has been made without public input and the sale will be conducted in complete secrecy; and

“Whereas if the people of Ontario lose majority ownership in Hydro One, ratepayers will be forced to accept whatever changes the new owners decide, including higher rates; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer has warned the sale of Hydro One would be detrimental to Ontario’s financial situation; and

“Whereas the Liberal government has removed independent oversight of Hydro One, including the Auditor General and the Ombudsman.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario immediately stop the sale of Hydro One.”

I support this petition and give it to page Adam to take to the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition and I would like to thank Eric Baillargeon from Capreol in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there’s no return; and

“Whereas we’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“Whereas we’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“Whereas we’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask page Brendan to bring it to the Clerk.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great many people in my riding, particularly around the town of Ingersoll, who have concerns about the siting of a landfill site in their community. It is:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents’ physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

“Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as to not require disposal in landfills.”

I affix my signature, Mr. Speaker, as I agree with this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROMOTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING
ACT, 2016LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROMOTION
DU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l’aménagement du territoire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. As critic for municipal affairs and housing, I will be splitting my time this afternoon, my hour-long lead, with the distinguished member for Parkdale–High Park. As you know, Ms. DiNovo is the expert in this House on inclusionary zoning. She has pioneered this concept in Ontario’s Parliament. On five separate occasions she has introduced a private member’s bill on the topic. And elements of inclusionary zoning have finally found their way into a Liberal government bill.

Speaker, I’ll mostly be speaking about other aspects of Bill 7, with the catchy title of the Promoting Affordable Housing Act. I would think by this time—after all, this is 2016, to paraphrase young Mr. Trudeau, the Prime Minister. His 2015 reference, of course, was to the effect that we are in modern times and it was high time we had an updated vision of equality. This bill is lacking in equality in a most egregious manner.

We have in Ontario two tiers of tenants in dire need of affordable housing: those who live in buildings built since 1992, and those lucky souls fortunate enough to rent apartments in buildings that were up and occupied by the end of 1991. A previous NDP government, armed with the best of intentions, brought in rent control on the owners of apartment buildings. It established caps on annual increases, at an earlier time when we were in an affordable housing crisis. Rents were skyrocketing then. People couldn’t afford decent, safe apartments. That’s when apartment rate increases were spinning out of control. Housing Minister Dave Cooke slapped a cap of 4.6% on rent increases in 1990 and 5.4% in 1991. This infuriated the owners of apartment buildings. You may recall, Speaker, that they actually chipped in \$25,000 and took out a huge ad in the Wall Street Journal warning American investors to stay clear of Ontario.

There was a crisis then in affordable housing and there is a crisis now in affordable housing in Ontario. We wait with bated breath to see how the association representing the owners of apartment buildings will respond to this bill when we hold public hearings. So far, the Ontario Home Builders’ Association say they’re interested as long as the public sector—government—takes responsibility for the costs of delivering the units via measures, incentives, offsets and supports. They would like the government to waive the provincial portion of the HST, waive the provincial land transfer tax, provide tax credits and make low-interest loans available through Infrastructure Ontario, among other incentives. They also don’t want to pay development charges. They don’t want to provide parkland dedications or have to provide adequate parking.

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We still have a lot of work to do at committee to shape this bill into something that will be acceptable to the key players. For me, tenants and those who would be first in line for inclusionary zoning units should always be kept top of mind. These are the people struggling to get by in today’s Ontario.

Governments have not done enough to address this issue. We haven’t been bold and we haven’t been

creative. The clock has caught up to us and now is the time we took real action. Now is the time we listened, really listened, to those who live with this reality every day of their lives. Now is the time we come together, if you will, in a non-partisan way, to take the right steps towards a real solution. We're kidding ourselves if we think we can skate around the issue of affordable housing and just go for the headlines instead of a lasting solution. Sure, it will take money, really serious money, before we can say with any confidence that we're getting somewhere.

Our existing stock of social housing is crumbling. The money needed for repairs and renovations is staggering. The need for subsidized housing remains great. The wait-list may never get down to a manageable size, but we have to try. The status quo just isn't good enough anymore. We have to make every effort. We must do better than we've ever done before. We must accept this bill as a starting point, and we must work hard to make it better.

The New Democrats in this House are prepared to roll up our sleeves and get at it. We're prepared to take this bill around the province to meet those most in need of affordable housing on their own turf. They can't afford to come to Toronto. If ever there was a bill that a committee needed to hear about from the stakeholders in every corner of the province, this is it. I hope the Wynne Liberals see it that way.

Affordable housing is much more than just a downtown Toronto issue. Show the people in this province you are finally ready to listen and to take action. Show them you're making affordable housing the priority it should have been, like it was back in the early 1990s.

As I was saying, back in the day the NDP government stepped in, showed real leadership and cooled off an out-of-control rental housing market. The problem since then is that neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals have shown that same sort of leadership when it comes to affordable rental housing.

The rent control formula in Ontario is woefully out of date. It hasn't been addressed in this bill. It hasn't been updated. Once again, we are in crisis when it comes to a lack of affordable housing in this province.

As I said, this is 2016. Surely the Wynne government, a government that came in with so much promise—Premier Wynne was going to be different. Premier Wynne is not showing the kind of leadership we were told to expect.

This bill, Bill 7, has the opportunity to bring affordable housing into this century. Think about it for a moment—this century. It stagnated in 1991, in the last century. It's unacceptable that tenants aren't treated the same. We shouldn't have a two-tiered system of tenant housing. At the very least, I say to the members of the Wynne government, if you won't do the right thing, at least take some baby steps. Don't ignore the problem altogether.

Change this bill so that buildings built since 2001, in this century, are covered by rent control. Then make sure that every year in the future, we update the rent control

provisions so that in 2017, for example, buildings built in 2002 are covered under rent control, and in 2018, buildings since 2003 are covered, and so on.

That's leadership lite, but at least it's taking baby steps towards equality. That's bringing affordable rent legislation into this century, not ignoring the problem and keeping it stashed and locked up in the past century. Such an update could be seen as a bit of a Liberal vision of equality. I mean, after all, this is 2016.

Our new housing minister must be full of the devil. I say that because of the old political idiom, "The devil is in the details." Right now, there are not a lot of details known beyond the ministerial level about this bill because so much of it is being left up to regulations. But on the surface, it looks to be an okay piece of legislation—just okay—but it's lacking substantive information.

For example, there is some debate yet to be held over the issue of development fees on what we know as secondary units, granny flats or basement apartments—a rose by any other name. The way it's written, municipalities would be prevented from charging development fees on those secondary units. Now, they're not happy about that. We'll hear from AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, when this bill gets to committee. They will be seeking a compromise on this provision.

By way of a short history, back in the early days of the last NDP government, homeowners who wanted to help with the affordable housing crisis had a real friend at Queen's Park. Partners are required if we are ever to get out of this crisis that we face these days. But back then, New Democrats gave homeowners who wanted to provide secondary housing units the right to do so, regardless of existing municipal zoning plans.

Speaker, as an aside, as you know, many of my friends and neighbours in Windsor–Tecumseh and Lakeshore are struggling these days to clean up after the sudden and torrential rainfall that nailed us last week. Several thousand basements were under water. Many of them were finished with carpeting and expensive furniture, and many of those belongings are now waterlogged, trashed and sitting curbside, waiting for the special pickups we've been promised.

I've heard loss estimates as high as \$50,000. Some of my neighbours had insurance and some didn't. Some cancelled their insurance a few years ago because we've never had a problem with water. Our sump pumps rarely, if ever, kicked in. We got complacent. Then last week, Mother Nature snuck up on us and kicked us in the pants big time.

I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier for their help in our recovery efforts. Windsor mayor Drew Dilkens and the mayor of Tecumseh, Gary McNamara, declared a state of emergency last Thursday afternoon. Lakeshore wasn't hit as hard, but Mayor Tom Bain knew he'd be able to tag on to any provincial assistance because of the severity of the damage.

Minister Mauro toured the area yesterday and agreed with the state-of-emergency assessment. Homeowners

can now apply for provincial funding from two disaster relief programs. Those who qualified won't get everything they've lost back, but the programs at least give many a glimmer of hope for a brighter, drier future.

But this raises a weakness in our disaster relief assistance program, and that's because residents who were flooded with stormwater can apply for assistance, but if combined sewers backed up and you were flooded with raw sewage from sanitary sewers, you're not eligible under existing laws. This is unfair. An act of God is an act of God, and as far as I know, God doesn't play favourites, so we should change the legislation so everyone who is flooded during a proclaimed state-of-emergency natural disaster is covered and eligible for provincial assistance.

Getting back to Bill 7, when it comes to social housing, our buildings are not in the best of shape. In some cases, they're actually crumbling. The cost to renovate or replace the stock of subsidized housing is enormous. The bill could do so much more on this front.

The Harris Conservative government downloaded the cost of providing social housing to municipal taxpayers. There was little or no money provided for maintaining the housing stock. Municipal mayors have been fighting ever since for those costs to be uploaded and put back into provincial budgets.

Just here in Toronto, the city needs nearly \$3 billion just to repair the social housing units provided by the city, the Toronto Community Housing developments. They've budgeted for and spent more than \$600 million already on renovations, but need the Liberals in Toronto and Ottawa to step up to the plate. They don't need nickels and dimes, Speaker, they need real dough, serious money for a serious issue.

1620

We face a crisis in affordable housing. More than 170,000 families across Ontario are waiting in line for affordable housing. That waiting list isn't going away anytime soon. I think it's great that the new Minister of Housing has introduced this bill. I'll tell you, he has big shoes to fill as he replaces the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale, the former minister. And he has some serious lobbying to do because, as I recall, the last Wynne Liberal budget cut \$20 million out of the ministry's budget. One would think that with this new emphasis on affordable housing, money would be pouring into the ministry and not being taken away.

There is a scary aspect to this bill, Speaker, and it has to do with the future of social housing agencies. Take the city of Windsor and Essex county, for example. Social housing in my region is the responsibility of the CHC, the community housing corporation. This bill gives those responsible for social housing the ability to sell or transfer housing projects without the permission of the minister. No longer do these service managers need the minister's approval to merge, dissolve or sell their social housing agencies. This opens the door for municipalities to finally get out of the social housing business if they want to do that—at least that's the way it appears without

knowing all of the details in the bill. I find that scary because, in public hands, rents were controlled, geared to income in many cases and, for the most part, affordable. What happens if those units are sold, fixed up a bit and rented out at new rates which are no longer as affordable? I guess we know the answer: The name of the bill could be changed to Promoting Unaffordable Housing Act.

There is nothing in here to protect tenants from renovations. That's when landlords seek above-guideline rent increases to recover the costs of unnecessary repairs or other questionable expenditures, and when you can't pay the new rates, you're evicted.

Likewise, this bill is silent on what is known as economic evictions: when rent increases are used as a weapon to get rid of tenants who are deemed difficult because they question standards in the building or they demand that the landlord uphold minimum safety or maintenance standards.

There's a controversy, Speaker, in many neighbourhoods over group homes. At question is the distinction between people who are related as opposed to people who are not related. Lodging homes, or group homes, house people who are not related but who are still in need of safe, affordable housing. On the other hand, many large, extended families living in what otherwise would be called a group home are considered acceptable. They may be brothers with families, lots of kids, cousins, aunts and uncles and a grandmother or two grandfathers. This kind of living arrangement is okay in some areas, but if the residents are not related—and this happens, as you know, in college and university towns a lot—city planners say such homes are not allowed. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has a different view, and there is often conflict. These homes still have to comply with noise bylaws, parking bylaws and the storage of garbage and so on, but this bill doesn't do anything to strengthen planning and zoning in such situations.

Speaker, there is an advocacy centre for tenants in Ontario. The centre's director is Kenn Hale. He does not believe that there should be bylaws that say it's all right for two families of five to live in a structure but 10 unrelated people, each with their own room, cannot live there. This is so-called "people zoning." It has no place in Ontario, according to Mr. Hale.

Let's get into rent control, which this bill ignores. Former NDP leader Stephen Lewis, during a minority Conservative government in 1979, forced Premier Bill Davis to bring in the first Residential Tenancies Act. Earlier, I mentioned my friend Dave Cooke, who used to represent my riding. Mr. Cooke put a cap on rent increases during a previous crisis in affordable housing. Then the Mike Harris Conservative government stripped away many of the restrictions on landlords. Tenants lost the protections as the Conservatives introduced what they called "vacancy decontrol." That allowed landlords to raise the rents to whatever they wanted, whatever the market would bear, once a tenant left a unit. It also exempted buildings first occupied in November 1991 or

later from rent increase guidelines. These provisions are still in effect.

Speaker, I know you'll get a kick out of this, but I want to turn back the clock a bit and give you a quote from former Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty. I know we don't hear his name mentioned very much these days in this hall, but Dalton McGuinty had an interest in rent control. In fact, while he was on the campaign trail in 2003, on his way to the Premier's office, Mr. McGuinty was looking for votes and he said, "I want to be clear about our plan for rent control. We will repeal the Harris-Eves government's Tenant Protection Act and we will bring back real rent control that protects tenants from excessive rent increases. We will get rid of vacancy decontrol that allows unlimited rent increases on a unit when a tenant leaves."

Well, Speaker, we have yet another example of a broken Liberal promise. They will say anything to get elected, just like how they wouldn't raise our taxes or sell hydro. Then, once in office, this political amnesia sets in and they have no memory. Heck, they'll even erase their memory sticks and their computer hard drives when it suits their purpose.

We have the opportunity with this bill. Let's not allow the broken promises of the Liberal past to weigh us down. Show us you really do have a plan. Show us you really do believe in equality. Show the people living in apartment buildings in Toronto and elsewhere that you are doing something to make their lives more affordable. We know the association that represents landlords is one of your biggest funders, but come on. This should be about what's best for the everyday people of Ontario, not the richest people. They have their own expensive housing to call home. We need to look after those who are just scraping by, trying to hold on to a safe place to live and raise a family—a warm place to live, an affordable place to live.

When this bill goes to committee, I hope we hear from the people who rent apartments and who worry whether they'll be able to continue to stay where they are. Yes, we do have many good—even great—landlords in Ontario. We should be very proud of them, and I am. But there are too many horror stories out there about unscrupulous landlords; the slumlords, if you will, those who gouge their tenants, don't fix up their units, don't maintain them and don't do enough to get rid of pests—the bugs, the rats, the mice—and those who allow their commercial garbage bins to overflow, and don't mow the lawn or fix broken windows or doors.

We can do so much better with this bill. If you want to own an apartment building in Ontario and rent it out to tenants, you should have an obligation to maintain your property to the highest standards.

The minister spoke the other day about the CHPI program. Four years ago, the Liberal government eliminated the Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit and folded it into something called the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, CHPI, but they did the changeover with less money, less funding. Funding to

municipalities is capped; it's not demand-based. Benefits are discretionary and people are prevented from appealing a denial of benefits to the Social Benefits Tribunal.

In March 2015, the Wynne Liberals slapped a two-year funding freeze on the CHPI program. The program has helped some of those most in need, but it could have done so much more. It could have been a boost to the other people who needed the money, and they didn't make the money available.

We recently gave second reading to a private member's bill to proclaim Hazel McCallion Day in Ontario. On page 202 of her book, *Hurricane Hazel: A Life With Purpose*, the former mayor of Mississauga says, "Affordable housing is quickly moving out of reach for a large number of Canadians. Where I live has one of the longest wait-lists for subsidized housing in the country. For years, we've been asking the federal government to adopt and implement a national housing strategy to alleviate the problem."

1630

Speaker, Hurricane Hazel speaks her mind. She goes on to say that "property tax was never intended to be paying for such things as social housing. These are important issues and they won't get solved without some bold and creative thinking from the upper governments." I couldn't agree more, Speaker, and that's partially why I'm disappointed with what I've seen in this bill so far, without seeing so many of the details that should be in there. As I said at the beginning, the devil will be in the details, because so far there's not a lot of bold creative ideas coming forward from the Wynne government with this bill.

The other day—last Wednesday morning, actually—Minister Ballard introduced this bill to the House. He referenced the member from London North Centre and something she said at a conference on homelessness last year. She, according to Minister Ballard, said, "If home is where the heart is, where is the heart of a homeless person?" I replied then that the heart of the homeless rests here, among the NDP caucus, the representatives of the poor, the downtrodden, the impoverished, the homeless—the very people who have been ignored by successive Conservative and Liberal governments for the past 25 years.

A long time ago, back in the days of the Rae government, a rent registry was established. That enabled easy access to information. If you were thinking about renting in a certain neighbourhood, you could consult the registry and see what the market rent—the average rent—was in the area you were looking at. Then you knew if what you were being asked to pay was reasonable or not. The bill is silent on such a registry, which clearly would be yet another tool in the workbench as we search for ways to build more affordable housing choices in Ontario.

We have an affordable housing statement, and "affordable" means, when it applies to rental housing, "a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30% of gross annual household income" or "a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent" in the region.

When it comes to homes, “affordable” comes into play when “housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed 30% of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or housing for which the purchase price is at least 10% below the average purchase price of a resale unit” in the region.

This bill does make it mandatory for municipalities to do an inventory on their homeless population, and that’s a good thing. Of course, as usual, the Liberals haven’t put any money into this bill for the municipal governments to carry out the surveys. It won’t be easy. Municipalities run lean. They don’t have staff hanging around with nothing to do so that you can just send them out to look for anyone who looks homeless. And so far there’s nothing in the bill that says those survey reports would ever even be released to the public, Speaker.

People living at the bottom or the low end of income distribution have much more at stake in the discussion on affordable housing. For them, the issue is far more serious than for the rest of us. Many of them live, as you know, paycheque to paycheque. If there is a disruption in that pay or an illness, an accident or an unexpected expense, the very next step could well be homelessness. Unexpected increases in a hydro bill, for example, could put some people over the edge, over that tipping point; and we have certainly heard a lot in this chamber lately when it comes to high hydro bills.

The bill will help us perhaps get a better handle on the real issue of homelessness in Ontario. If the surveys are accurate—and I know it’s always difficult to enumerate the homeless population—maybe it will help us determine all of the reasons for this crisis and maybe it will lead us into a more informed direction as we work to resolve the issues as best we can.

We need all of the partners in the housing industry to step up to the plate and accept some responsibility for the mess we’re in. We need to work with them as partners and offer incentives to get more affordable housing units built.

Homebuilders—people who own and build apartment buildings—aren’t the bad guys here. They can do more to help us out here, yes, but they’re not the bad guys. We need to work with them as equal partners. Well, maybe some more equal than others, but they need incentives to get them interested. They can’t be expected to pay out of their pockets to resolve our mutual problem on their own.

There are a number of tools at our disposal: tax credits, development fees, dedicated parkland, off-site units, co-operative housing. I’m sure Ms. DiNovo will be touching on some of these aspects when she turns her attention to the inclusionary zoning aspects of this bill.

Speaker, I just mentioned co-operative housing. As many of you know, we’ve been waiting for some time now for word from Ottawa on renewing their Ontario co-op rent supplements. Co-op federal operating agreements will end within two years unless a more permanent agreement can be reached. If not, 7,000 low-income households are at risk of joining the affordable housing crisis in Ontario.

Ontario has an obligation—the Liberals could do so. They could indicate in this bill that they will encourage their federal Liberal cousins to get serious about this situation. Here in Ontario we have 125,000 people who are proud to call a housing co-operative their home.

As I said at the beginning of my hour-long statement, I will be dividing my time equally with the member for Parkdale–High Park. Ms. DiNovo is the champion of inclusionary zoning. She has introduced five private member’s bills on the subject. Two passed second reading, were allowed to languish in committee and finally, finally we’re at the point where there are inclusionary zoning aspects in this bill.

I would now turn the floor over to the member from Parkdale–High Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He gave a lengthy and very well-thought-out examination of the bill before us and also really paved the way for my comments.

I want to thank, also, the new minister of not only housing but the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. It’s true that housing truly is absolutely essential if we’re going to tackle the issue of poverty.

I had the great good fortune, I guess, to attend the Toronto Housing Summit last week. It was organized by Mayor John Tory. Looking around that auditorium that was very well covered by the media, I saw just about every housing activist that there was to be had in the city of Toronto and even beyond Toronto, people I hadn’t seen in years and some I see frequently, some like Cathy Crowe, a very well-known street nurse whose activism goes back to the days in 1981 when it was declared that Toronto had a national disaster—talking about national disasters—and it was called homelessness.

Now, the sad reality is that homelessness is worse now than it was back in 1981. The waiting lists for affordable housing are longer by far than they were back then. The availability of affordable housing is worse than it was back then. Arguably, poverty—in fact, not arguably; factually, poverty has gone up significantly since then, including child poverty. Really, the disaster is now. We live in a disaster, certainly in Toronto, in terms of affordable housing.

I was amazed at that summit how polite everybody was, because I’ve been through so many meetings on housing and poverty over the years and so little has been delivered by both this government and the government previously that really that should have been an angry mob. I was amazed that they weren’t angry, that they weren’t throwing things at the federal minister and the provincial minister and the city officials. City officials do what they can. I’ll give them a break on this one because, as you heard from the member from Windsor–Tecumseh speaking before me, municipalities and cities have very, very little to spend on affordable housing. Really, what they’re looking at is property taxes. You cannot build a housing strategy on property taxes, nor would you want to.

1640

Absolutely, we need a national housing strategy. We've yet to see one. We need one. But we also need provincial action. Now, it was at that same housing summit that the housing minister announced that this government had spent \$4 billion since 2003 on affordable housing—\$1.2 billion in the city of Toronto. I can tell you that that sounds like a lot of money until you think about it for a minute, because when you look at the budget of this government since 2003 to the present, every year being over a hundred billion—usually \$120 billion to \$130 billion every year—\$4 billion is very, very little. It's infinitesimal. Certainly, \$1.2 billion for the city of Toronto, the largest city in Canada, is a drop in the bucket. In fact, it's a slap in the face to Toronto. John Tory, who, as you know, is no Liberal, said as much and asked for more help.

Now, here we have a bill, as the member said, dealing with inclusionary zoning, and I'm going to circle back to it for a minute because people who are watching this might not know what that means. What "inclusionary zoning" means, to give an example, is to allow the municipalities, which they can't right now, to ask of developers that—and this is just an example—if they build over 50 units, say a condo tower or even a new build in the suburbs, 50 units, that 10%, let's say, be set aside for affordable housing. That can look very different in different municipalities. It can be rent-to-own, for example, or it could be just affordable rental.

That's the idea, the end result of which would be something like what we have, the gold standard—by the way, not only in Toronto but the gold standard in Ontario and, arguably, in Canada—like St. Lawrence Market. I actually say, go see St. Lawrence Market, because there you won't notice the difference between market-priced housing, co-ops and Toronto Community Housing—affordable housing. They're all mixed together. That is the gold standard. It's a great place to live for everyone who lives there. You can't tell the difference between who has money and who doesn't—and it works. And guess what? To be non-partisan about it, it was done under Conservatives: a Conservative mayor, a Conservative Premier.

So it can be done, it has been done, but it really hasn't been done since the 1970s. Perhaps Regent Park, but even Regent Park isn't as broad a base of affordable housing as St. Lawrence Market. So we know it can be done. We know mixed-use housing is this the way to go. It's the best way to go for everyone. For the children too, by the way, who live there, who aren't just with children of their own economic bracket but who are with children from all economic brackets. That's what inclusionary zoning does.

But here's the interesting thing: It doesn't cost anything. It doesn't cost anything for taxpayers. It doesn't cost anything. So why has it taken almost 10 years in this House, five tablings and a second reading to get it to this point?

Again, to go back to what it is, all it is, is asking developers to set aside a certain number of units. And, by

the way, it's good for them too, because in a rising market like Toronto, which won't last forever, by the way—I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but that which goes up tends to level off and sometimes come down. I've lived in one of those downturns. If you remember, in the early 1990s, in condo development—I knew many people that invested in condos. Sound familiar? Those who invested in condos as investments had to hold on to those "investments" for sometimes 20, 30 years before they saw their money out. They had to wait for the next sweep going up. Meanwhile, they were paying more in many cases to keep holding onto those investments than the investments themselves were worth.

So we have seen downturns, especially in the condo market in our cities in Ontario. We've seen that happen. When that happens, this is good news for developers because then you've got units that will not sell that you can bring some money in on. It's good news. It's also good news for developers in this sense: Right now in Toronto, it's almost impossible for young people to get into the housing market. It's virtually impossible. The best you can get is a tiny condo, and that's on two salaries. If you allow affordable units in condo developments, for example, you also allow young people—say it's rent-to-own—to actually get into the market. That is then the next generation of those who can sell and buy. Otherwise, you're not seeding the market for your developments. So it's good for development, it's good for developers and it's also good—most importantly—for those who desperately need housing. As I say, it can look very different depending on the municipality.

Until this bill passes, until we get inclusionary zoning, you can't have that happen. This is important to note. We need a change in the Planning Act, and that's what this bill does. It gives that change in the Planning Act, which we desperately need, so that a city like Toronto—which, by the way, under David Miller, voted for my bill, among many other municipalities—can then bring in inclusionary zoning requirements and not get taken to the OMB and defeated there. We need this, and cities need this.

Now, to the case of Toronto: I want to deal with section 37 dollars, because I see a former councillor, the member from Scarborough—Rouge River, sitting here, among others. He will know what I'm talking about when I talk about section 37 dollars. In this bill, for some strange reason—it wasn't in my bill—there's an either/or clause: either inclusionary zoning or section 37; you can't have both. It's a direct dig at Toronto and Toronto's city council. Why? I put that in this bill. I objected even at the time. I understand the reasoning and have great regard for the former Minister of Housing, Ted McMeekin, but this was not necessary.

I'll tell you why it's a problem and why we will be bringing in an amendment, based on what we hear from our city councillors in Toronto. You need some flexibility. Yes, we want the city to bring in inclusionary zoning. We want all of our municipalities to have that tool and to be able to use that tool, particularly in Toronto, where the need is arguably the greatest. We want that tool and we

want to get municipalities to use that tool. But you also need a little bit of flexibility around having that tool. You need maybe some structure around those developments. You need maybe some parking. I hate saying parking, because we have too much of it in one sense. We want to be a car-free Toronto. But you need some infrastructure at times, and the city needs money to provide that infrastructure for development. So you want some flexibility there. Not that it should be simply a situation where, as it is now, a councillor's negotiating ability with the developers in their riding is all; no, we need affordable housing. We don't need another fountain in a park, or whatever else that section 37 money could be used for. We need housing.

Our councillors have asked for it, I think they deserve it, and I think they need some flexibility with, again, the focus—not the boot—on the fact that inclusionary zoning is really what we need to get us there.

By my reckoning, by our research reckoning, not by Jennifer Keesmaat's—I beg to differ with her on this one; she was looking at very, very high levels of opting out. But let's just say, to take my example at the top, 50 units, 10% of those 50 units: If this government had passed my inclusionary zoning bill when it was first tabled and first went through second reading, if the city of Toronto and the rest of Ontario had had that tool since then, in about 10 years there would be about 120,000 new units of affordable housing available right now, and not one tax dollar being spent, because that's how much development has taken place in Ontario in the last 10 years. So if we actually had brought it in back then at a very low level—at 10% of developments over 50 units—the effect would have been staggering. We wouldn't have 170,000 families waiting for affordable housing, some for 10 to 12 years—that's the average. We would have actually housed many of them.

That's what it can provide—not only what it can provide, but what it is providing in some 200 jurisdictions across North America. In fact, arguably, if the United States and individual states did not have inclusionary zoning, there would be very little affordable housing anywhere in the United States. Most of the states have used this tool because it doesn't cost tax dollars. That's what's so appealing about it. It has been used everywhere, including throughout Europe. London, England, for example, one of the most expensive jurisdictions in the world, has inclusionary zoning on the books.

1650

To get back to the housing issue generally, when I was first elected, I was the housing critic. I remember sitting in committee with the then housing minister, John Gerretsen—who was a lovely man, and kudos to him. He was very honest. I remember asking him about the state of affordability and the absolute disgrace of homelessness in Ontario, one of the wealthiest places to live in the world and yet we still have this national disaster on our hands. I said, “If you look at the cost of keeping someone in a shelter—think about this—the staff involved, the money it costs to keep that shelter going, by our estima-

tion, our research—not ours alone—it's around \$100-plus a night. That's staggering. That's ridiculous. You can get a hotel room for that.”

And he admitted it. He said at committee—it's in Hansard—“Yes, you're right.” So I said, “What is the problem then? Why are we paying all of this money out of this place to keep people ill-housed, precariously housed and homeless? Because it's costing us money. It's not free. It's costing us money to keep people homeless, precariously housed and ill-housed. It's costing us money. Why is all this money going out when we can't, first of all, do builds”—remember builds, when governments used to be in the business of actually providing new housing?—“new builds, real rent controls—anything, really? Why can't we do that?”

He kind of shrugged his shoulders. I'll tell you why we can't do this, Mr. Speaker, and why we can't do a number of other social service programs we need in this province, like child care et al., but certainly why we can't do housing that costs money up front—yes, new builds cost money up front; there's no question about it. It's because of the election cycle; that's why. Because \$100 a night in a shelter, just treading water and keeping the status quo going, keeping people precariously housed—keeping people poor, quite frankly, because without good housing, you never escape poverty—the money that it takes, the billions it costs every year to keep people poor, precariously housed, homeless, ill-housed etc., and also factoring in, of course, health costs, justice costs and everything—it's expensive to keep poverty at the rate we have it at in Ontario. So why do we pay that money, but we won't pay the money to fix the problem? Because it requires a lot of money up front.

But guess what? You see the return down the way. It may take five or 10 years to see that return, but you see it. You see it in increased job prospects from construction. You see it in lessened costs in terms of health care, in terms the justice system etc. You see the money back. Just like child care; Quebec has proven that. When you subsidize child care, yes, it costs a lot of money up front, but you see the money back when—guess what?—women start working and paying taxes. It's the same for poverty. When people get jobs, because they have a house, because they have education, you see the money back, but it requires political will, and political will is sadly in short supply on the other side of the aisle.

So that's why we don't put money into housing, even though it costs more to keep people ill-housed, precariously housed and on affordable housing wait-lists. That's the sad reality, and that's why I wonder why those people at that Toronto housing summit weren't really angry, why they politely clapped.

This Thursday I think ISARC is coming again. They're a group of faith leaders, always with poverty as their focus. They've come every year since I've been here—10 years—and every year they politely clap when they hear us all, each party, stand up and speak to them, even though homelessness is getting worse, ill-housing and the wait-list are growing, and poverty is increasing.

Don't be nice. That's a message for someone watching from the housing community and the poverty action community: Don't be nice. "Nice" is a four-letter word in this place, Mr. Speaker. Don't be nice.

It's a calamity that we're looking at in this province. It's a national disaster. It's worse than it was in 1981 when it was declared so. It's still bad now. So inclusionary zoning will help. Yes, it will, if it's done right. And there's no question that we have amendments to make to this bill about how to do it right.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh also mentioned the problem with bad landlords. We're not talking about good landlords; we're talking about bad landlords here. Another bill that I introduced many years back was for landlord licensing. I don't know if we all remember the bedbug crisis. Guess what? It didn't go away. It's still there. There are still people living in places that are bedbug-infested. Nothing really has changed; it just fell off the media radar.

I have about 90% tenants in the south part of one of the parts of my riding, in Parkdale, and up till recently, there were about 10,000 affordable, privately held units available there. We're losing those due to gentrification, because we don't have, as the member said, real rent control; we have vacancy decontrol. Despite the promises of the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, to bring it in in 2003, we still don't have it 13 years later. So what happens when a tenant moves out is that the rent gets jacked up. This is happening right across the city of Toronto; hence, we're losing affordable housing units—and that's not even talking about the Airbnb reality and the shared economy. We are losing affordable rental units across our province, and we need to react to that in some way because that's going to swell yet again—that 170,000 families who are waiting for affordable housing.

The landlord licensing concept is very clear: If you don't make the necessary repairs that the municipality has said you should make, you don't get your licence renewed to rent again. How simple can that be? It doesn't even need to cost very much for a licence. It's a source of revenue for the municipalities. But there's a lobby against that. If you think this is very pie in the sky, I want to tell you that there are jurisdictions that do it way better—way better. We don't even have to invent this. We just have to put into place what other jurisdictions have already done around housing.

I had the great good fortune about six years ago to travel to Sweden. I needed some good news. It's not just Sweden, Mr. Speaker—it's actually all of Scandinavia and a lot of western Europe—but let's focus on Sweden because that's where I went. Sweden is a country of nine million people. Right now, we have 13 million in Ontario and counting. So they're much smaller than we are and it's a smaller tax base than we have, yet somehow they managed to build 100,000 new units of housing a year for 10 years. They called it their Million housing program. Think about that. They don't have a housing problem in Sweden. In fact, they don't have a poverty problem in Sweden. Is all poverty abolished? No, it's not, but

everyone has a house; everybody has the essentials. What do the essentials look like? Free post-secondary; free child care, more or less; dental care; pharma care; all the things that we in the NDP would like to see for all Canadians. We'd like to see for all Canadians, as Tommy Douglas said, what we'd like to see for ourselves. They already have that. They have that not just in Sweden and around Scandinavia, but throughout western Europe. So it can be done. It simply can be done, if there's political will to do it. It exists. It exists out there.

I want to give a shout-out, before I forget, to Parkdale legal in the Parkdale side of my Parkdale–High Park riding. They have done phenomenal work for tenants for many, many years. I would strongly advise all members here, if they have a legal aid clinic that works with tenants, to go talk to them. They'll tell you what it's like to go to landlord-tenant tribunals, to fight on behalf of their clients who are evicted for all sorts of ridiculous reasons—where repairs are not done.

I remember visiting one lady—she was in her nineties at the time—who lived on the top floor of an eight-storey building in South Parkdale where the elevator, the one elevator, kept going out of service. When the elevator went out of service, she couldn't get out of her apartment and she couldn't go anywhere.

1700

She's in her early nineties and she lives on the top floor. She told her landlord that there was a leak in the ceiling of the apartment. I happened to be there with Mary Hynes. I remember it very well from CBC. She was tootling around with me for some reason—it had nothing to do with housing—and we knocked on her door. I think that I was out canvassing, and she just decided to tag along. We knocked on this lady's door, and she showed me what the landlord had done in response to her complaint. There was literally a tube running from the hole in the roof into a bucket. That was the response of her landlord.

When I talked to my city councillor, who I have a great deal of time for, he said, "Yes, the same landlord"—there were multiple citations against this landlord. But he said, "There's nothing more we can do. We just keep slapping him with more and more citations, and he keeps ignoring them."

That's the situation for tenants who are lucky enough to have a place right now—not for all of them; of course, there are good landlords. But there has to be some mechanism to deal with that. That mechanism is certainly not in this bill.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh raised another very troubling thing—and I want to spend a few minutes on it—and that is about, for example, in Toronto, Toronto Community Housing. Toronto Community Housing, as he said, has a \$3-billion shortfall for repairs. When you think back to that \$4 billion over 13 years, with the \$1.2 billion for Toronto, you can see what chicken feed it is, because here you have just our social housing being behind \$3 billion.

But the answer is not to privatize it. The answer is not to give it away, because then what do all those people

who live there do? Where do they go, those who waited 10 to 12 years to get one of those units? Well, it looks like the government is allowing municipalities to even think about that. And then what? Give them a rent supplement that they could take to go where? And find what? I can tell you that in the city of Toronto it would have to be quite the rent supplement to afford any of those market rents—certainly not anything any Toronto Community Housing person I know could afford. Then again, even if it was affordable, privately held housing, what's to stop the landlord from increasing the rent just to meet the rent supplement?

You see, it's a problem. Community housing is like any other community asset. You've heard us talk about Ontario Hydro. Housing is a valuable asset, especially in the city of Toronto. What it would cost to replace it is astronomical, but we need to keep it in good repair so that people can live there safely, or we will lose it, one way or another.

That's something, again, that's not even really dealt with here. What's dealt with is giving municipalities, sadly, the incentive, in a sense, to just get rid of it and just sell it. We saw what happened in England when Margaret Thatcher tried to do that. Remember that she sold community housing? "It's yours for a dollar," to people who live there. That was lost forever. Good luck for the people who got it; bad luck for the next umpteen generations, because there it was: social housing gone. So I would hope that on the Liberal side they wouldn't repeat the same kind of mindset that Margaret Thatcher had when she did that and to keep valuable community assets like our affordable housing in our communities.

So yes, we need that and, yes, finally, we need inclusionary zoning, we need real rent control and we need landlord licensing. We need a lot of tools in the toolbox to address the issue of housing, and—dare we dream?—we also need new builds. In fact, going back a few elections, it was part of our platform: 10,000 new units of affordable housing built. We need new building going on. We need construction. It's good for everyone. It's good for the construction unions and it's good for the people who live in the units. And much as it's hats off to Habitat for Humanity, they can only do so much with very, very little. We need a massive government response. I know it's never going to be what it was in Sweden and in Europe, many with humongous housing projects—which, by the way, completely fed into and spurred their economies—but at least we need some nod in that direction. New bills, rent controls, inclusionary zoning and landlord licensing: These are all that we need. It's not rocket science. It's very simple.

And if the government did it, if they put the money in now, they would save money in the future. Have the political will. Get this bill, at least, right, so that we can move forward with some answers for those who have been waiting so long—since 1981, in fact, when homelessness was declared a national disaster.

Let's start to see the people we walk over who sleep on the grates in our municipalities. Let's start to talk to

the families who are on those affordable-housing lists. Let's meet with our Legal Aid folk, who deal with them day in and day out. Let's finally get something right on the housing file, and that is starting with Bill 7.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm also delighted to join this debate, but I just want to start by responding to some of the comments by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

One of the things we Canadians don't do enough is to recognize how good we really are. I know that the member from Parkdale–High Park made repeated references to how much better Sweden is than Ontario, so just out of curiosity I did a little bit of research. I know you can't use electronic devices but with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I have a series of articles on Sweden.

I'm just going to share one. It's from their main paper, I believe, called the Ledger. It says, "Sweden Struggles With Growing Poverty Problem." All I'm trying to say is, let's not assume that everybody else there is doing this perfect job and somehow Ontario is this horrible place, because the fact is that in Ontario we have so much more to do, but we must also recognize that we have done so much.

I believe that this legislation that we are debating today is certainly a step in the right direction, a very innovative way of solving the issue of affordable housing. I just wanted this House to recognize that as Ontarians and as Canadians, we do come up with innovative solutions. We are doing very well, and I think it's wrong to constantly assume that everybody else is doing better than us and somehow we are not doing well. I do find that a little troubling, because it's important that we recognize the good work that we are doing.

This bill in particular is something that I think will touch the lives of many Ontarians, and we should all be so proud. I look forward to the Legislature supporting this initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from Ms. DiNovo and Mr. Hatfield. I apologize for not using their riding names, but I found that both of those members were very passionate about Bill 7.

I want to give a shout-out to someone I know the member for Parkdale–High Park knows in my riding. He's a local city councillor named Leigh Bursey. He's also the president of the Brockville Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corp., a corporation that I'm proud to say was hatched during the time that I was mayor of the city of Brockville. Leigh is very passionate about inclusionary zoning. I will not be surprised when he brings that motion to Brockville city council after this bill makes its way through the Legislative Assembly.

I know that Leigh is having a round table on Thursday at the Brockville Public Library at 6 o'clock, albeit commenting on the national housing strategy that the federal government is contemplating. I wish him well at that meeting. I hope he has a good turnout, and I would

hope that he and other members of municipal councils across the province would be watching this debate.

In terms of schedule 4 of this bill, on inclusionary zoning, I guess I'd like the ministry to really come clean and let me know exactly where they stand on this issue. The way I interpret the bill, the government isn't going to force any municipality to put forward an inclusionary zoning provision. However, I also note in the bill that the minister could prescribe a municipality to be involved. So you either do it all voluntary or you come clean to Ontario's 444 municipalities who you're going to make mandatory for inclusionary zoning.

1710

I think, really, the devil is in the details with this government, and I think, finally, on this issue, they need to tell us exactly what they're going to propose.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to congratulate the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the member from Parkdale–High Park for their wonderful contributions to this debate on Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act.

The member across the way talked about—she said how “better” we are, and I think she meant to say how “better off” we are than some other places in the world.

I just want to point out that we now have a Minister of Housing and a minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, so we're tying housing with poverty. We know that there are people who are homeless, and we need to do something to help people get off the streets and have a roof over their head.

The inclusionary zoning piece is extremely important, and it's good that it's in this bill. But we can't rely on the private market to be the ones to drive the affordable housing need. We must make sure that it's included so that it actually fulfills what is required by municipalities.

It's really discouraging, Speaker, to walk in Toronto, specifically, and even in London, and see people with carts full of their personal belongings. The weather is getting colder and people will be finding places to sleep. We need to do better. We need to have inclusionary zoning and we need to make sure we promote inclusionary zoning and not leave it up to the private sector to build up the affordable housing stock that municipalities have.

I implore this government to do better when it comes to inclusionary zoning so that people actually have affordable places to live and some safety.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Affordable housing is so important, not just in Ontario but all across Canada. I think it's important that we all work together—the federal and provincial governments and the municipalities—to help alleviate this situation.

As we know, the five most expensive places for housing rentals are Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton—and I bet you don't know where the number five city is.

Interjection: Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It is Barrie. Barrie is the fifth most expensive place to rent.

We had a lovely woman come into our constituency office and she had \$500 per month for a room to rent. We hunted high and low. We could not find a room for her to rent that was \$500 a month. Of course, we looked into it and got one of the groups that work with people who have housing issues to help her out.

Barrie city council, a few years ago, okayed second suites, and we thought that that would help. However, these second suites ended up being Scott McGillivray type of suites, and some of those suites rent for more than people's mortgages. So people who need housing can't afford them. As I said, they cost more than some mortgages, and they're all rented too.

We need more affordable housing. I believe this bill will help to alleviate the problem.

I was very pleased to be with Minister Ballard today for an announcement at the Salvation Army Bayside Mission in Barrie, along with John Howard, the Busby centre, Elizabeth Fry, Youth Haven and the county of Simcoe, where the minister announced \$15 million for affordable housing. I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? Sorry. Back to the member from Parkdale–High Park for final comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to thank our housing critic, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, for all his incredible work on this bill, and going forward, really looking forward to those committee hearings and the amendments that we will be putting forward because we will be putting forward amendments. Trust me on that one.

A couple of the comments for the minister responsible for seniors affairs: You have to be careful where you get your information. We can all google pretty quickly but, of course the devil's in the details in that information, as well as it is in this bill, and that is to say, what counts as poverty in different countries. Certainly if your education is paid for, your child care or your home is paid for, you have an 85% unionization rate—which they also have—if your dental care is paid for, standards are a little bit different over there. Suffice to say that when the Swedish social service folk came from their government here and did a tour—I was one of the ones who met them at that point because I was social services critic, and that was just a couple of years back. One of our folk asked them where they'd like to tour. Would they like to go to a food bank? The very sweet answer from one of them was, “Why do you keep your food in banks?” Clearly, they have a different experience of what poverty means than we do. Suffice to say, check your sources.

But to go back to the bill itself, inclusionary zoning—absolutely. Finally, we're there. We need to get this done, but we need to get it done right. We need to look at amendments to this bill to make it stronger, and that's really what we're suggesting. Opening up the housing conversation with G7 means it's an opportunity for the government and the minister who happens to have the

two portfolios to really get it right on a cornerstone of one of the social determinants of health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm here to speak to Bill 7, an act promoting affordable housing. The key linchpin in this act is quite a dramatic change, and that is the inclusionary aspect of this change. Inclusionary zoning has been opposed for many years by different groups, different municipalities. They say, "No, no. We can't have inclusionary zoning." I suppose there's still going to be a lot of people against this legislation because they don't like the idea of including affordable housing in legislation.

What this does is it gives municipalities the tools, if they want to, to use affordable housing as part of the approval process for development approvals. Again, this is something that's been opposed for many years. I commend the minister for finally taking this strong step which has been long advocated by people who've been seeking more opportunity to include affordable housing in the building that is taking place. There is a building explosion that's taking place in some parts of this province and some parts of the country. The missing ingredients in the building explosion are affordable housing components.

This bill will give that opportunity to municipalities, if they so choose—not all municipalities will choose to include inclusionary zoning because there's a different housing reality in different parts of Ontario. The reality of Toronto, the reality of Ottawa or Barrie is much different than the demand for housing and the supply of affordable housing in smaller communities. Whether it be Cornwall or North Bay, there are different housing markets. That's why there's flexibility in this legislation which allows municipalities who feel they can use this tool to pass this legislation.

It is a very, very important step. I know that Colin Vaughan, who used to be a former city of Toronto councillor, for years pushed for this inclusionary zoning amendment to take place. Now he's in Ottawa advocating for affordable housing and a national housing policy in housing.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: I really want to commend Adam for fighting for this for many, many years at Toronto city council, and now he's doing it in Ottawa.

1720

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You said "Colin."

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay. Sorry. I said "Colin." His dear father passed away. He was a good friend of mine, and he helped stop the Spadina Expressway. But anyway, I don't think Adam would mind being mentioned by his father's name, as he has been many times.

I just want to get back to the affordable housing piece which is in this bill. I really think it is an important, strong step, but it's not going to go unchallenged because, as I've said, historically, there have been many people against it.

In terms of housing, I know that in cities like Toronto or Vancouver or Barrie, there are immense pressures to

find adequate housing. One of these huge pressures is the result of the continual influx of new people that want to live in cities like Toronto or want to live in cities like Barrie. You're almost a victim of your own success as a city. Every year, I think there are about 50,000 to 100,000 people who move into Toronto, non-stop; 50,000 to 100,000 people come into the Toronto/GTA area every year from immigration, from other parts of Canada. So that pressure never stops. If you're in Prince Edward Island or New Brunswick or Halifax, that never happens. But in the GTA and in Greater Vancouver, this never stops. It is not easy for municipalities or provincial governments to provide housing instantaneously because, as you try to house the people that came in last year, you've got another 50,000 to 100,000 people coming next year. It never stops. So you can imagine how difficult it is.

It's amazing that, in the ranking of cities—I saw another ranking today that said that Toronto is the second-best place in the world to live in. Despite all its warts and all its, you might say, challenges, people still want to live in Canadian cities. So we have to provide very innovative approaches to this.

One innovation that I've talked about to Minister Ballard: I said that I know the former director of planning in the city of Toronto used to talk about main street development. In our main streets in Toronto, Mr. Speaker—if you take a walk along Bloor Street from the Don River all the way out to Scarborough, you'll see that most of Bloor Street where there's a major subway there are two-storey buildings and one-storey buildings. The question is, why not allow—God forbid—three-storey buildings on main streets, or four-storey buildings? Or we could go over the moon and have six-storey buildings on our main streets. We already have public transit on our main streets; we already have stores and libraries.

Nowadays in Toronto, one of the best things that has happened, actually, is that a lot of people that have come into our city, a lot of young people, don't even own a car. They ride-share; they are cyclists. A lot of people who live on our main streets don't want a place to park their car because they don't own a car.

We should invite people to live on our main streets. Many of them would want to live on our main streets, but right now, the way the local bylaws are, it's almost impossible for a property owner on a main street to get the approvals to do more than two storeys. So we go along, block after block, on our main arterials—even Yonge Street, which is part of my riding. You'll see, if you go up Yonge Street, except for the nodes at the corners of Eglinton and Yonge, there are still one-storey buildings all the way up Yonge Street.

Why not allow them to have, as of right—God forbid—three storeys, as of right. No; they have to go through all kinds of planning applications and rezoning, so most property owners say, "What's the use? I'll just sit on the property and let the capital value appreciate. I'm not going to try to build another storey." That would be one thing that could be helpful in allowing, as of right,

three-storey buildings on our main streets, where municipalities want them. In Mississauga, maybe they should be allowed to build three-storey buildings on their main streets instead of just strip malls and the old, traditional parking lots. House people on main streets where there is public transit and they can get to work and school. So that's one thing. It doesn't cost any money to allow, as of right, on our main streets—no cost. In fact, you'll get housing. It's not a silver bullet, but it's part of the new ideas we have to look at if we want to build housing.

I know that there was a housing summit here in Toronto, and word came out: "We need \$12 billion to fix the housing problem." Well, it's not just money. We also have to change the way we zone and plan, and our land use approaches. That's why this bill is about land use. It's about allowing that incentive of inclusionary zoning to give builders who are going to build—say, "Listen, 10% of your units have to be affordable." Many builders would do that because they know they would get approvals. They could maybe get a little bit more density, a little bit more height. Many builders favour this inclusionary zoning. The builder who risks his or her capital would be in favour of this—also, people who are going to be living in the affordable housing. We just can't continue to build condos that are very, very expensive and very difficult to finance, to say the least.

As you know, this housing challenge is very acute right now, with what's going on in Vancouver. The federal Minister of Finance had to intervene yesterday—a historical intervention. Bill Morneau said that the federal government, for the first time in many years, had to intervene because in Vancouver, even more than in Toronto, the prices have gone totally out of the affordability range. So he intervened and said that from now on, there are going to be some restrictions on foreign ownership. That means that if you are a foreign buyer, you will not be able to use the capital gain loophole, as it is right now. As you know, the traditional capital gain is an exemption for the Canadian resident who lives in their home. They don't pay capital gain on their principal residence. But a lot of these foreign speculators have been going to places like Vancouver, they come to Toronto, and they essentially get a tax break on this capital gain exemption. That is going to be stopped by the fact that now you have to be a Canadian resident to apply for the capital gain exemption. I mention that in terms of the affordable housing piece because that's what's driving up land prices; that's what's driving up house prices.

So we're not just talking about social housing; we're not just talking about affordable housing or our hostel system, which we all need. We're also talking about our children and our grandchildren, who are going to find it impossible to buy a house.

The average detached home in Toronto—an average detached little bungalow on a 20-foot or 30-foot lot—is about \$1.1 million. I don't know if anybody in Chatham-Kent would believe that. It's \$1 million for a detached little bungalow that's not even fixed up. So where are our children and grandchildren ever going to be able to buy a home if this continues?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Move to Windsor.

Mr. Mike Colle: Somebody said, "Move to Windsor." I know a lot of people are finding Windsor very attractive. Kingsville, Essex, Harrow—they're beautiful. Some people move to Bob-Lo Island, too.

When you mentioned Windsor, I was just going to mention that one good thing about what is happening is that there is a huge movement of young people to Hamilton, which is a great place to live. Hamilton real estate prices are starting to go up. People are finding that it's much more affordable to live in Hamilton. You can still come to Toronto, if you work in Toronto, in the GTA, on the GO train. Hamilton is really becoming a hot place to live because it's affordable. It's a great city. You're near the water. You've got the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. So why not move to Hamilton? It's a lot more affordable than Barrie. So people are now moving to places like Hamilton, and that's a very good thing.

In Toronto, meanwhile, we're stuck with the speculation that takes place in real estate, and when real estate speculation takes place, it not only hurts potential homebuyers, but it hurts people who are looking for affordable housing, because land prices keep going up, so people who want to buy tracts of land to build affordable housing can't afford to buy them. I know we've had some of our churches build affordable housing, and some of our non-profit partners, but with land going up and up and up, it really makes it difficult. So this land speculation has to be tempered.

1730

I know in Vancouver, in the month of September, house sales went down 33%. That's because the BC government intervened and imposed a 15% tax on foreign buyers of homes in the city of Vancouver—a 33% drop in sales of homes. Now, whether that is a tool that should be used is up for a lot of debate and discussion, but that's how severe it's getting, that the province of British Columbia had to intervene because of this incredible escalation of prices in the Vancouver area. They're even higher than Toronto.

That is why the federal Minister of Finance has intervened. He's also putting more restrictions on mortgages, that now there are going to have to be more stress tests on mortgages, which there weren't before. As you know, Mr. Speaker—I don't know if you've heard—there are people carrying mortgages of \$500,000, \$800,000. These are young couples who are buying homes that are little bungalows with an \$800,000 mortgage on them. So, rightfully so, we have to warn people and say, "Listen, are you really ready to take on that load?"

I know the mortgage rates are low now, historically, but I don't know if you can remember—I know the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell remembers—that back in the 1980s and 1990s, we had mortgage rates that at one time went up to 18%. People lost their homes. They're not always going to be at 2%, 3% or 4%, but how do you tell a young person, "Well, be careful. Mortgage rates could go up"? They won't believe you, because they've been low for a number of years.

This is the incredible challenge we have here in Ontario. There's no magic bullet here. This bill, I think, deals with a critical part of affordable housing, but it is part of a longer series of initiatives we have to take as the provincial government, and municipal governments have ;to take these initiatives too.

Somebody mentioned secondary suites, and that was a very important part of legislation that the Liberal government passed a number of years ago, which allowed for nanny suites and secondary suites to be included. So if you've got a big house and you've got a basement that you get up to standards, that would be legal to live in. Before, it was very difficult. Basement apartments and nanny suites were always considered illegal, but now they're allowed as a result of the provincial change we made a number of years ago.

The problem with the allowing of secondary suites is that many municipalities have made it almost impossible for people to put in secondary suites. Do you know what they've done? They've increased the number of hoops you've got to go through to make that secondary suite legal. So a person who has a big home and says, "Well, I'm retired now. I'm going to rent part of my home," then says, "Well, why should I spend all this money fixing up that secondary suite when city hall will never give me the approval?" Some municipalities don't like that secondary suite inclusion.

I know that in Toronto they're very proactive on that, because tens of thousands of people have found new homes in those secondary suites, but in other municipalities across Ontario they have the ability to do that but haven't done it. So there's potential for a lot more housing there—to have fewer restrictions and less red tape, to allow people to have secondary suites in their homes so that they can make a bit of income, especially if they're on fixed income, and then provide housing for a student or a single person. They could easily live in that big home, in a secondary suite.

But again, many municipalities are not co-operating with that initiative. That's why, with this initiative here on inclusionary housing, I hope that it will be taken up by many municipalities. I think it will be in the municipalities where there's a very, very vibrant, active housing market. It doesn't mean that all municipalities are going to look to it, but I think it is a good option, and I like the fact that it is an option, because one size does not fit all. It's much different in terms of the housing market and the affordability market whether it be Toronto or Apsley. If you're going to rent a place in Apsley, you could probably get it for about 500 bucks a month. You can get a nice place in Apsley, but Apsley is not Toronto.

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: Or Pontypool—you could probably get affordable housing in Pontypool, but it's different.

You can't tell the good people in Pontypool why you have to have this inclusionary housing. No, they can make up their own decisions in Peterborough or in Chatham-Kent or in Toronto. They're mature governments. Let them decide if they want it or not.

These are the number of things that I've raised. I just want to remind people that there are many things we could do. But remember, it's not just money alone that's going to fix the affordable housing challenge. It takes changes in our zoning and our attitudes. It also takes the fact that there are many acres of land available in all our cities that could be made into housing. The problem is that assembling this land and making it available for housing is most expensive and difficult, so we have to make that easier to allow marginal land—even in Toronto, there's all kinds of land available that could be used for housing, but because of the expense and the process and the time, sometimes that is years and years in the waiting.

The good news is that in my own riding I have an amazing housing renewal project. The Lawrence Heights renewal project is a multi-million-dollar project where we're building affordable housing and we're building mixed housing right at the Yorkdale subway. We've got a great consortium in there that is giving scholarships to young people who live in Lawrence Heights and, at the same time, providing jobs and building affordable housing. What's happening at Lawrence Heights is going to be even better than Regent Park.

So there are good things happening, but it is a tough road ahead. Nothing is easy when it comes to making affordable housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for speaking to Bill 7.

In the general area, I agreed with him because he talked about affordable housing being far more than building supportive housing or subsidized housing in the province of Ontario. All housing is getting out of reach for a lot of families, and I think that's really the challenge we're facing: The cost of living in Wynne's Ontario is getting so high that people can't afford houses to live in.

We found this out with the cost of hydro. We did a bit of a survey from people to tell us what it is that the hydro costs were doing to them and how it has affected them. I would just like to read an email that I got from one family:

"I have a family of five. Over the past several months, there has been a large increase in our hydro bill. We went from paying \$275 a month to a whopping \$392 with our last bill. This has put major stress on our household.

"One of our children has severe autism as well, and we really do not need this extra stress. We live from paycheck to paycheck, and this increase hurts us majorly. It is especially hard because my husband, who usually works all the overtime he can, has injured himself and is off work on sick-and-accident for four to six weeks.

"The result of that makes his paycheck almost \$500 less than normal. I should not have to choose between electricity and food for my children, but that's what this rate has made me come to."

Mr. Speaker, that's really the challenge here. We have to find a way to make all housing affordable to the people

who need that housing. I really do question the comments that were made, that somehow this will have an impact on the height restrictions along transit corridors. This bill does nothing to do that. This bill has some good parts in it, but I think that the government really needs to work on making all housing affordable for all people, not making it more expensive for some so we can try to help those who can't pay the rent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What a pleasure it is to stand in the House following the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, especially since he suggested that people in the Toronto area and the GTHA should move to Windsor and move to LaSalle and Amherstburg and Kingsville and Essex and Leamington—

Interjection: And Bob-Lo.

1740

Mr. Percy Hatfield: —and Bob-Lo Island and to the town of Tecumseh. That is absolutely right. The 100 Mile Peninsula—the community of Essex, did I mention Essex?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You did.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's affordable. It is absolutely affordable. As you know, in Chatham-Kent it's absolutely affordable to live in our part of the province—still affordable to this day.

I have to apologize somewhat to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, because when he mentioned Colin Vaughan, who was a political reporter and mentor of mine, and his son, Adam Vaughan, with whom I worked at the CBC—in fact, they and Ms. Naidoo-Harris, the minister without portfolio and Associate Minister of Education for early years and child care, and I were all at the CBC together at one point.

Colin Vaughan was an absolute gem. He passed away way too young—I think he was 68—nearly 17 years ago. He was such an amazing character—a city councillor, obviously, but then a political reporter. There was nothing you could put over on this man. He knew it all, he'd seen it all and he led the way for political reporting in this province for many years.

Adam, again, was another political reporter, and he and I were elected to our city councils at the same time, he in Toronto and me in Windsor. We were both political reporters and went into municipal politics. I always thought he was a New Democrat, and then, out of the blue—I'm surprised—he runs for the Liberals. He gets a better deal, and he's the parliamentary minister to the Prime Minister right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to join this debate and respond to the remarks by my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence. Unlike Windsor, which may have affordable housing, Guelph definitely does not. It has a very difficult rental market, and I think that's maybe not unusual for university towns where a lot of students move in every fall and there's tremendous competition.

So the rents are quite high for not-very-good-quality rental housing. The whole issue around providing more affordable—not just more, but also affordable—rental housing is huge, and I think this bill that's before us will help that.

One of the things with the whole issue of inclusionary zoning—that can work in a number of ways, but the principle behind it is that we want to have a variety of housing in one community or one project. There's a project going through approvals in Guelph right now actually, in downtown Guelph at the old tennis courts across from the Church of Our Lady—now the Basilica of Our Lady. It's actually a project that Guelph will be presenting as the current tranche of affordable federal-provincial housing.

But what's cool about it is that it demonstrates why inclusionary housing works, because it's a private developer that's proposing it, Tom Lammer. What he is proposing is to do a mix of market-rent and affordable-housing units, and the fact that you may get an extra storey, as my colleague mentioned, would enable him to go to up an extra storey, have market units but still include affordable units. I think this is something we need to do more of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to give comment today to the member from Eglinton on Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016. We've heard a lot of comments in the Legislature of the need for affordable housing. I hear it constantly in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. My wait-lists for affordable housing are in the thousands, and it's many, many years—I'm talking at least over six years—to wait. Unfortunately, I have more and more people adding onto the list, waiting for affordable housing because the number one issue in my riding is the cost of hydro.

I've said this many times in the Legislature, and it is absolutely true: It's the tipping point for people, especially those who are on fixed incomes, the marginal people who were just making the bills as it was over the few last years. It's actually heartbreaking, the stories I hear in my riding where they are cooking their food outside so as to not turn the stove on. They have load limiters on, like we're in some other country, because they can't afford the hydro. Hydro has actually come and put a load limiter to limit the amount of hydro they can use. I have people that are hitchhiking because they can't afford a car now to get to the job to pay the hydro bill.

My food banks are at their max. They worked hard. I can't praise my food banks enough for the coordination among themselves to try and meet the ever-increasing need, the need for extra money. Look at the United Ways: 30% of their budget is helping people pay their hydro bill. Affordable housing, for sure, is needed, but the cost of affordable housing is going to be so much because they are going to have a hydro bill even if they get into some type of affordable housing. That has been something that is actually in crisis proportion in my

riding—the level of people in poverty who are desperate and need more housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for final comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to thank the members from Oxford, Windsor–Tecumseh, Guelph and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I was disappointed that the Conservatives didn't mention whether they're in favour of or opposed to the inclusionary housing provisions. They talked about hydro but they didn't talk about the housing issue.

I just want to say to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I think we have to do more to promote these great communities all across Ontario. I don't think we really do enough of a job to say, "Hey, listen. These are great places to live. Whether it's Hamilton or whether it's Harrow or Amherstburg, these are fantastic places." I think if we can do more of that, we'll get people to move businesses and jobs. We've got to do a better job of that. Everybody hears of Toronto and they all come here. But these are things we've got to do more of.

I just want to say that the one thing I wanted to emphasize is that when we're looking at affordable housing, I think we've got to look at the macro picture, and that is that when we're talking about affordable housing, we're talking about keeping land affordable, keeping building lots affordable and encouraging development through these inclusionary housing provisions. We've got to look at building social housing. So it's not just building one type of housing; we've got to think of ordinary people who may want to live in a small condo or a small bungalow. We've got to think of the whole spectrum of housing because it's all interrelated and you can't just say, "We have people waiting for assisted housing." No. We've got to look at what's happening to our land prices and our housing prices. Our children and grandchildren: Where are they going to live? Can they get a job where they live? So we've got to work together with the federal government and the municipal government. I think this approach is part of that collaborative approach which says, "We want to work with municipalities to provide more affordable housing when we build housing."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise today in debate of Bill 7, promoting affordable housing in Ontario in 2016.

I'd first like to point out to my colleagues that when I arrived here 10 years ago as the member for Nepean–Carleton, I wasn't a critic right away. I was actually the deputy critic to the now critic for municipal affairs, Ernie Hardeman. I was a young woman. I had just turned 31. I was told by John Tory, our leader at the time and now mayor of Toronto, that I would be apprenticed to Ernie. So, of course, because Ernie has such great hair, I actually nicknamed him at the time "The Donald." He never fired me, and he has assured me he will not be

running to make America great again, but it's wonderful to be able to be part of this again. Of course, he now sits beside me, and he's the Chair of public accounts and I'm the Vice-Chair, so it's a fun little thing. We've become really good friends over that past decade.

He has put a great deal of thought into our response as Progressive Conservatives to this piece of legislation. I wanted to point out that one of the previous PC speakers, I think our colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, spoke about affordability in perhaps general terms but in real terms that affect the people of Ontario regardless if they live in big cities like Toronto or my city of Ottawa, or anywhere, frankly, across this great province.

1750

She talked about something that's near and dear to my heart. This Thursday, I will be attending an event for the Barrhaven Food Cupboard. Speaker, you know that over the past decade I've talked about the Barrhaven Food Cupboard many, many times. I've raised tens of thousands of pounds of food and thousands of dollars for them, because I've noticed, as I represent one of the highest-growth areas in all of Ontario, that the need today in the province of Ontario for our food banks has grown. My colleague pointed that out.

I'll tell you why, Speaker: because of the increased taxes that we have seen, and I'll talk about that momentarily. It's the result of the increase in high hydro bills right across the province. By the way, on November 1, this government will yet again raise the price of hydro in the province through a rate increase, even though they promised that there would be an 8% rebate on the provincial portion of the HST.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes, but that's not till next year.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: But as my colleague points out, that's not until next year, meaning they're going to raise your prices first before they reduce them. As Laurie Scott pointed out, this is a very big problem.

But let me talk a little bit about the development industry and affordable housing, because I look at this bill and—we'll support it on second reading; on third reading, it will depend on the amendments. But I represent a very fast-growing riding. I can fly out of Ottawa at 6:25 a.m. on Monday morning, taking Porter, and then I can fly home on Thursday at 6:30 p.m., and as I either take off on my ascent, when the weather is good and the light is still there, or on my descent, I can see new communities being built.

I represent 168,000 people, which is more people than live in the province of Prince Edward Island. I have five city councillors and I have 2.5 members of Parliament. That just goes to show you the rapid growth that we're seeing in communities like Barrhaven, Riverside South and Findlay Creek. We're building more schools in Barrhaven, Riverside South and Findlay Creek than every other member in the city of Ottawa is getting, and that just goes to show you how big this riding is. The current Treasury Board president and former Minister of

Education knows how persistent I am on getting schools—she's nodding, for the people back home, about how persistent I can be on getting new schools. But it brings me to the issue of—

Hon. Liz Sandals: We've built you a lot of new schools.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yes, she's pointing out that I get a lot of schools, and I know her Liberal colleagues in Ottawa are not very happy with me. I've been very persistent, and I give out a lot of Ontario flags, too, because that's my favourite part of it.

I want to talk a little bit about this, because I've worked with the development industry beyond even before I was elected. I worked for an Ottawa city councillor. Her name is Jan Harder. She is currently the chair of planning in the city of Ottawa, and it's appropriate, because she represents the fastest-growing ward inside the city of Ottawa, which is in Nepean–Carleton. We talked a lot about development.

Before that, because I was her executive assistant for many years before I got elected, I got to know the development industry and I got to understand the housing crisis that we see in urban centres like Ottawa and Toronto. This is where I have a concern: The way that the government is going about this, you might end up seeing a system where affordable housing is paid for by a small group of new homebuyers and not by society as a whole. If society thinks that we need to have appropriate housing for those that need it, then it should be, in my opinion, funded by all taxpayers. We can look at a variety of different models. We discussed some in the city of Ottawa; we've discussed others here in the city of Toronto. But I think that there needs to be an idea here where we don't ghettoize people. That is a concern that I have.

I live in a great community. Speaker, I want to tell you something—I'm going to give you a little microcosm. The city of Nepean—it's now the city of Ottawa. My little girl goes to a school that's over 50 years old. It's one of the oldest schools in Nepean, and it's now an urban school. She is just incredible. The daughter of the deputy head of the paramedics of Ottawa goes to our school; we have an Olympian whose little sister goes to our school; I'm the MPP; 60 Syrian refugees are in this school. There are kids from every walk of life, every corner of the earth, from every income level. Those kids are amazing, and they're not ghettoized. The kids know that they're all equal. Now, some days I might get a call home because I've had a little 11-year-old who may have been misbehaving, but you know what? She does take after her mother. I shouldn't be telling tales out of school, but I got one of those calls about two hours ago. But that's okay. She's not watching right now, so she doesn't know I just did this to her.

I have this concern because I believe that if we want to talk about education—and I've just talked a lot about it—that's the great equalizer. I think we've moved past this notion in society where people of one income level live in one area and people of another income level live in

another area. In fact, we want to integrate people to be inclusive.

At the same time, I don't know how the government's current model will be well implemented, and I worry. Again, we provisionally are supporting this, but I worry, when you're looking at a time where, over the past 25 years, tax bills on new homes have increased from 3% to about 25%, about how that will work the way the government is promoting this. When you look in Toronto, for example, much of the shortage has been driven by environmental policy. At the same time, government policy around here has been restricting housing supply. It has also implemented dramatic tax increases at this level.

You look at the PST, you look at the land transfer tax and you look at the fact that we're trying to generate social change here. I think that we have to have a full discussion on how to best approach this.

I want to go back to my city. In Ottawa, the average price of a new, starter single-family dwelling is about \$450,000. That's pretty high. That's probably not in one of the higher growth areas. This is a startling statistic that I got from the Greater Ottawa Home Builders: \$110,000 of that is tax in one form or another.

So if we want to talk about affordable housing, we're going to have to look at some of the systemic challenges that people face across Ontario. There was a story in today's paper, and it might be published for tomorrow but it's in the Sun today, where it said, "Heat or Eat?" This was a phenomenon that happened in Nova Scotia about a decade ago when hydro prices got too high there, and now we're starting to see it in what should be Canada's most prosperous province but it isn't.

We see the HST. We see debt retirement charges. We see the new cap-and-trade. We see the health tax. This is making life more unaffordable for everyday families who are trying to make ends meet, or people who are trying to stay in their homes. That's a concern, and that's what's driving them to the food bank, like my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is saying. When you look at the amount of taxes, and now we're contemplating new municipal taxes, it's going to be much more difficult—and then you look at the development charges that are on top of that as well, and transportation taxes for LRTs and subways.

All I'm suggesting is that we have to look at all of that as part of the package too, and have a serious discussion. In late December 2015, the province of Ontario approved another new tax that every municipality could adopt on top of their existing development charges, so once again, you're going to see that going up. That could cost new homeowners about \$5,000 per home, and it's going to be paid mostly by new homeowners in high-growth areas like—and I'm going to go back to my community—Barrhaven, Riverside South, Findlay Creek and a new, emerging community called Greely.

Speaker, I know my time is up, but I want to say that this is an incredibly important debate, one I'm glad that we're taking very seriously. I think that we should look at all models and not be ideologues about this but be very pragmatic in our response.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank all speakers engaged in debate this afternoon.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I now turn it over to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

1800

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for having to have you here at this late hour—and to the Clerk and the table for being here. It is part of the parliamentary procedure, when a minister refuses or does not answer a question in the Legislature—I do have the opportunity to take this further, with a late show, which is why I'm here tonight. I'm pretty sure I could talk for hours and hours.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the Aylmer district stakeholders who have taken the time—a volunteer group created by this government about 10 or 11 years ago to give them advice on the fish and wildlife maintenance in our four districts in the area of Ontario. This group had great relations with Ministers of Natural Resources. They speak highly of Donna Cansfield; they think that she was probably the best Minister of Natural Resources they ever had to deal with. It's unfortunate that, since I was elected in 2011, the relationship with the ministers has decreased substantially.

I want to thank Minister Mauro; when he was MNR minister, he met with the Aylmer district stakeholders. I give him kudos for doing that.

Since I was elected in 2011, the one question we brought forward was on the special purpose account and how that money is being spent. The special purpose account was created by the Conservatives in 1995. In 1996, they made some changes to it. Basically, they made agreements with the hunters and anglers of the province: "We're going to charge you a licence fee, but we're going to take the money from royalties that we get from the commercial fishing industry, we're going to take the money from the fines we levy on people who are breaking the rules and regulations when out hunting and angling, and put it in a pot, and that money solely must be spent to improve the opportunities for hunting and fishing in this province."

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Dedicated funds—special purpose account.

What has happened, though, is that hunters and anglers do not know how that money is being spent. They've questioned this ministry, this government, for years: "How is that money spent?"

When I was elected, this government, per year, was supposed to table a report on the special purpose account. They hadn't tabled it in years. It took me until maybe 2013 or 2014—pressuring this government—that they actually tabled these reports and caught up to the legislation.

When you say, "Yes, they've tabled this report. There's your answer," that's not the answer, because when you look at the reports you get their pie charts; they don't specifically answer the question of how this money is being spent.

This all stems back to the fact that the Aylmer district stakeholders group, created by this government to help with fish and wildlife management, asked for \$10,000 of the \$70 million that's collected each year in licence fees—\$10,000 to study the deer population in our area because we were having trouble with it. We wanted to understand what's going on with it so that we could make changes. We could ask the landowners to make changes, and the hunters, in order to strengthen the population of the deer. Their response was, "We don't have the money. There's no money. There is not \$10,000 out of \$75 million that's collected." So that raised the issue where did the money go? They have not had a single answer from this government of where the money goes and how it's spent.

In fact, what brought today's question up was the fact that the district stakeholders had a freedom-of-information act, and they asked, "Can you give us details on how the money is spent?" The response from the government was, "We don't keep those records." However, the Financial Administration Act states that in order to disburse the money from a special purpose account, you have to provide receipts and record it. So the government is not doing their job. What are they doing with the money? It upsets the hunting and fishing population.

Mr. Speaker, the regulation books the government produces each year have declined. Many hunters and anglers cannot get access to the regulation books they need while they're out in the field. They can't use their phones because they don't get reception.

The reports weren't tabled. The Environmental Commissioner even said, "It appears that the Ministry of Natural Resources is walking away from many parts of its job to safeguard wildlife and natural resources."

The response to all these concerns? This government introduced a service fee of \$2 for every transaction with the Ministry of Natural Resources, plus HST. They boosted the amount of money that the hunters and anglers have to pay for zero in response. They can't even give details of how they spent this money.

The minister claimed they gave \$800,000 to the Aylmer area. Prove it. Give us the details, give us the

receipts of how they've spent that money. That's my question to this ministry, and I hope they answer me soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry now has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to be here this evening. My wife has gone to the hockey game. No, it's not a hockey game, it's a baseball game, isn't it? Sometimes we get a little confused.

I should mention that it is, of course, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and having been a PA on previous occasions, I'm so used to saying MNR. I want to acknowledge our minister—who is extremely available at all times—Minister Kathryn McGarry, and the two previous ministers, who my good friend across the way had mentioned, Minister David Oraziotti and Minister Bill Mauro, who have both done a great job.

I thank the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London and answer his question in regard to Ontario's fish and wildlife special purpose accounts, generally referred to as SPAs. The member opposite has raised concerns about our fish and wildlife special purpose accounts. I can assure you that I am certainly not aware of anything, and I'm certainly not concerned, because I do sit in on the major ministers' meetings.

On this side of the floor, we're committed to protecting Ontario's natural heritage while supporting recreational and economic opportunities for the people of Ontario. In 2015, just past, Ontario's fish and wildlife SPA contributed nearly \$71 million to fish and wildlife management activities in Ontario. That's a substantial and significant number. The SPA helps fund important fish and wildlife management programs, such as monitoring fish and wildlife populations; fish stocking; fish and wildlife research; conservation officers and enforcement; hunter education; and contracts to outside scientists and experts to conduct research.

However, in a province as vast as ours, there is always more to do, and I would be the first to admit that. That's why our government provides additional funding on top of the SPA to provide for additional wildlife management programs, additional research, and additional education to improve the fish and wildlife management in our province.

The member opposite has raised particular concerns about transparency in regard to the SPA. Our government remains committed to an open and transparent process. That is why we publish an annual report on the fish and

wildlife SPA and table these reports here in the Legislature. Once tabled in the Legislature, we take additional steps to ensure the public has easy access to those reports by making them available on the government website.

If the member opposite is so concerned about our special purpose account numbers, I encourage him, and of course everyone else, to look online at our website. It's not a complicated one; even I could look it up. It's ontario.ca. Take that and run with it and you're off to the races.

Reports from 1999 to 2014 are currently available on that site. These are very informative and clearly demonstrate how the funds from the SPA are being used in programs such as fish stocking, lake trout rehabilitation, and efforts to eliminate and mitigate the spread of aquatic invasive species.

It takes a long time for five minutes, doesn't it?

All of these efforts are helping our fish and wildlife populations, and I think everyone's aware of that.

Furthermore, our government has firm guidelines that govern how SPA funds are used, and there are processes in place to review these guidelines each year to ensure Ontario is getting the most out of our investment.

In the interests of transparency, our government has made changes, beginning with the 2014-15 annual report, which make it much easier to read and understand the data, numbers and information being presented to the general public. These changes include our annual reports being written in an infographic style, more detail is provided for the description of services, and important facts and figures are highlighted throughout. Additionally, we have provided more details on the SPA funding than ever before, breaking down expenditure details by service category to show the public what their money is really going towards.

Speaker, it is important to share that within our annual report we produce background information on the fish and wildlife SPA as well as financial information which includes: a summary of SPA recoveries; revenues and year-end account balances; actual expenditures by standard account; and a summary of future planned spending.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I appreciate your time.

There being no further matters to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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Gélinas, France (NDP) Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Nickel Belt Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Harris, Michael (PC) Hatfield, Percy (NDP) Hillier, Randy (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest Oxford Kitchener–Conestoga Windsor–Tecumseh Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB) Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Barrie Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Malhi, Harinder (LIB) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills Nepean–Carleton Brampton–Springdale Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP) Martins, Cristina (LIB) Martow, Gila (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin Davenport Thornhill London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB) McDonell, Jim (PC) McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry Cambridge	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC) Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB) Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Etobicoke–Lakeshore Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Attorney General / Procureur général
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa-Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
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Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch